VOL. 4

SOS

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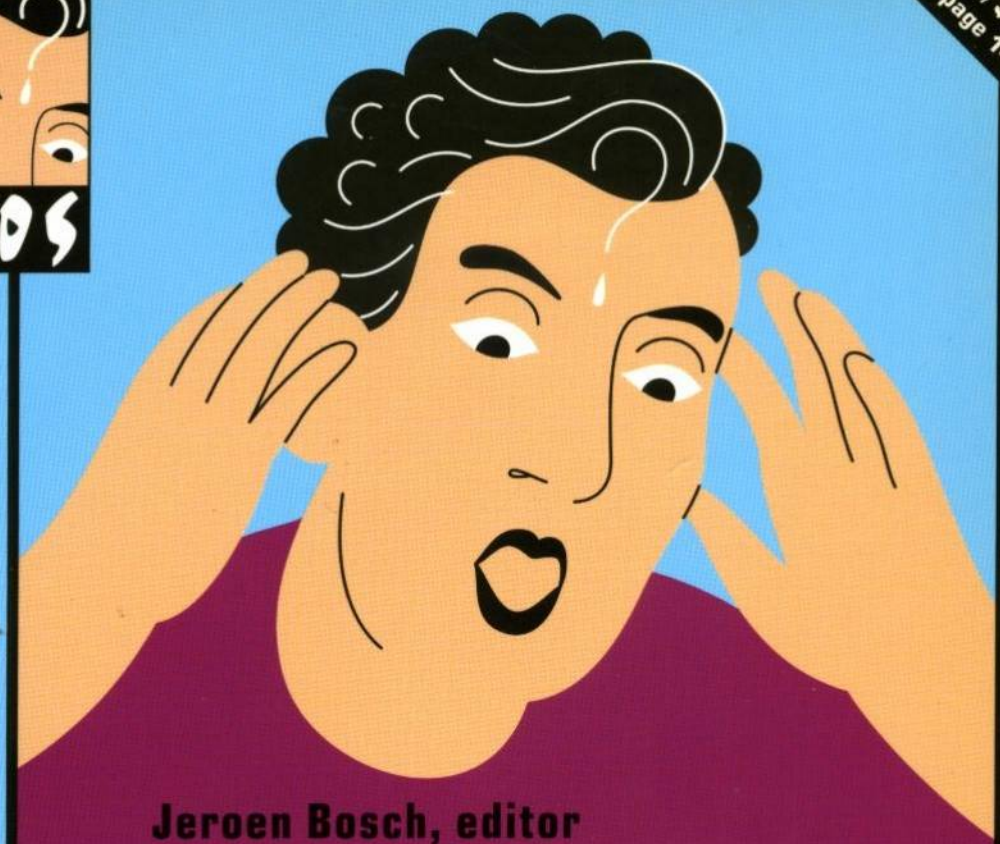
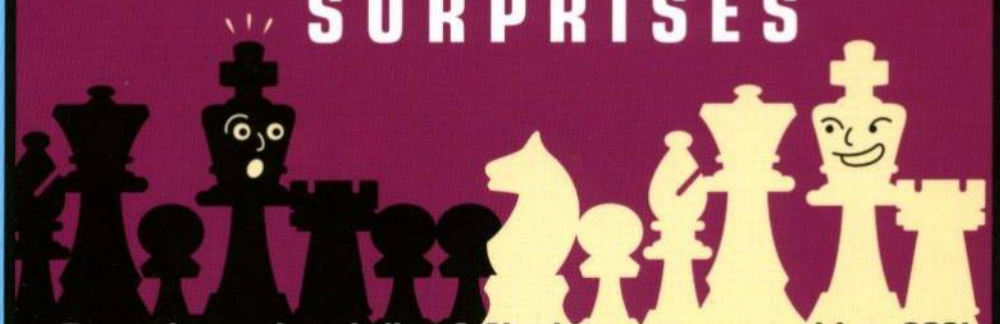


Jeroen Bosch, editor

SECRETS OF OPENING SURPRISES



Too cool to study main lines? Shock your opponent with an SOS!

NEW IN CHESS

SOS – Secrets of Opening Surprises 4

SECRETS OF OPENING SURPRISES

4

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Contents

1	Jeroen Bosch	The SOS Files	9
2	Artur Kogan	A Surprising Scandinavian	17
3	Jeroen Bosch	The Alapin Opening	29
4	Sergey Volkov	Attacking the Slav Stonewall	35
5	Jaan Ehlvest	The Dutch Benoni	41
6	Jeroen Bosch	The Katalymov Variation	49
7	Glenn Flear	The Other Long Diagonal	58
8	Adrian Mikhalchishin	Following Smyslov and Réti	67
9	Dimitri Reinderman	King's Gambit Vienna 1903	75
10	Jeroen Bosch	Move-order Your Sicilian Opponent	79
11	Dorian Rogozenko	An Indian SOS, Part I	86
12	Dorian Rogozenko	An Indian SOS, Part II	96
13	Glenn Flear	Patzer Sees a Check	101
14	Adrian Mikhalchishin	The Bellon Gambit	109
15	Jeroen Bosch	Kozul's SOS against the Rossolimo	111
16	Igor Glek & Elena Sedina	Alekhine's Blunder	119
17	Mikhail Gurevich	Flexibility Zone	127
18	Who is Who?	Authors and their Subjects	143

CHAPTER 1 - page 9

Jeroen Bosch

The SOS Files

Winning the SOS Competition

CHAPTER 2 - page 17

Artur Kogan

A Surprising Scandinavian

The Ilundain Variation

CHAPTER 3 - page 29

Jeroen Bosch

The Alapin Opening

1.e4 e5 2.♘e2

CHAPTER 4 - page 35

Sergey Volkov

Attacking the Slav Stonewall

Let's play 5.g4

CHAPTER 5 - page 41

Jaan Ehlvest

The Dutch Benoni

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5!?

CHAPTER 6 - page 49

Jeroen Bosch

The Katalymov Variation

The SOS-way to play the 'quiet' Rubinstein

CHAPTER 7 - page 58

Glenn Flear

The Other Long Diagonal

Owen's 1...b6

CHAPTER 8 - page 67

Adrian Mikhalchishin

Following Smyslov and Réti

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4

CHAPTER 9 - page 75

Dimitri Reinderman

King's Gambit Vienna 1903

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 f5!?

CHAPTER 10 - page 79

Jeroen Bosch

Move-order Your Sicilian Opponent

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5!?

CHAPTER 11 - page 86

Dorian Rogozenko

An Indian SOS, Part I

A knight on the edge – 7...♘h6

CHAPTER 12 - page 96

Dorian Rogozenko

An Indian SOS, Part II

Bringing the knight to c6 – 6...♘e7

CHAPTER 13 - page 101

Glenn Flear

Patzer Sees a Check

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+

CHAPTER 14 - page 109

Adrian Mikhalchishin

The Belion Gambit

When White avoids the Benoni/Volga

CHAPTER 15 - page 111

Jeroen Bosch

Kozul's SOS against the Rossolimo

Sublime provocation – 3...♘a5

CHAPTER 16 - page 119

Igor Glek & Elena Sedina

Alekhine's Blunder

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6!?

CHAPTER 17 - page 127

Mikhail Gurevich

Flexibility Zone

Anti-Meran with 5...a6

CHAPTER 1

Jeroen Bosch

The SOS Files

A Weird Win

SOS-3, Chapter 13, p.104

In SOS-3 Karel van der Weide explained the ins and outs of 3...♘c6 in the French. Lithuanian GM Eduardas Rozentalis recently won a 'weird' (Van der Weide's epithet for 3...♘c6) game against the talented Indian Negi.

□ **Parimarjan Negi**
■ **Eduardas Rozentalis**
Hoogeveen 2005 (3)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘c6
Karel van der Weide calls the text a little weird because Black restricts his options.
4.e5
Gaining space. The main line continues 4.♘f3 ♘f6 and now the lines fork:
● 5.e5 ♘e4 6.♗d3 ♗b4 7.♗d2 ♘xd2 8.♕xd2 f6 9.a3 ♗xc3 10.♕xc3 fxe5 11.♗b5!? exd4 (11...0-0 12.♗xc6 exd4 13.♘xd4 bxc6 14.♘xc6 ♕f6 15.♕xf6 gxf6 16.♘c7+ ♔f7 17.♘xc8 ♖fxc8∓, Babula-Matlak, Czech Republic 2004/05) 12.♗xc6+ bxc6 13.♕xc6+ ♗d7 14.♕c5 ♕e7 15.♕xc7 0-0 16.♕e5 ♖f5 17.♕xd4 ♗b5 with compensation in Ibragimov-Peric, Connecticut 2005.
● 5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♗xe7 ♕xe7 8.♗d3 ♕b4 9.0-0?! ♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♕xc3 11.♖b1 ♕a3 (Van der Weide prefers Black) 12.♕d2 ♕e7 13.♖fe1 b6 14.♗b5 ♗d7 15.c4 a6 16.♗a4 ♘a5 17.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 18.cxd5 ♕xd5 19.♖bc1 0-0-0 with a slight edge for Black in Sygulski-Heberla, Ostroda 2005.
4...♘ge7
Interesting play by Rozentalis. Van der Weide investigates the immediate 4...f6, attacking the pawn chain at the front: 5.exf6 ♘xf6 6.♘f3 ♗d6 7.♗g5 0-0 (with his easy development, Black has overcome all opening problems) 8.♗d3 (8.♕d2 ♕e8 9.♗b5 ♗d7 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♘e5 ♖b8 12.♖b1 c5 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♘xd7 ♕xd7 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 16.0-0 ♕f7, Zdebskaya-Zielinska, Chisinau 2005) 8...♕e8 9.♕e2 ♕h5 10.♗xf6 ♖xf6 11.0-0-0 ♗d7 12.♔b1 ♖af8 13.h3 ♔h8 14.♘b5 ♗f4 15.c3 a6 16.♘a3 e5 with an easy game in Kovchan-Kudin, Alushta 2005.
5.♘f3 ♘f5 6.♘e2 Uberdeckung, but 6.♗b5 followed by 7.♘e2 is an option.
6...f6 Attacking the pawn chain. **7.♘g3 fxe5 8.dxe5 ♗c5 9.♗d3 0-0 10.0-0 h6** Covering the important g5 square, but creating some weaknesses as well. **11.♗xf5 exf5 12.♘h5! ♘e7** 12...♗e6 13.♘f4 ♕d7 14.♖e1 is slightly better for White. **13.♖e1 c6 14.♕d2 ♘g6?**

15.e6? Negi misses a good chance here. After 15.♘xg7! ♔xg7 (15...f4 16.♘h5 ♗g4

17.♘f6+) 16.♕xh6+ White wins back his material with huge interest. **15...♕e7** Now Rozentalis has everything in order. **16.b3** Hoping to use the a1-h8 diagonal for an attack, but Black's next move prevents this. **16...♗b4 17.c3 ♗d6 18.♗b2 ♘h4** Making headway on the kingside. **19.♘d4 f4** Introducing the major threat of 20...♕g5. **20.g3 ♕g5 21.♕d1 c5** Very strong, although 21...f3 should win as well. **22.♗a3** 22.♘b5 fxg3 23.♘xg3 ♘f3+−+. **22...fxg3 23.hxg3 cxd4 24.f4** There is no decent alternative, White is lost in all lines. **24...♗xf4 25.♗xf8 ♗xg3 0-1**

Gotcha in the Réti!

SOS-2, Chapter 15, p.116

In SOS-2 Mihai Grünberg discussed an interesting line from the Réti, where White's main positional idea is to surround Black's advanced d-pawn, to isolate it from its defenders and finally to win it. The whole concept owes a lot to the ideas of the German chess explorer Stefan Bücker.

□ **Martin Labollita**
■ **Rafael Leitao**
Buenos Aires 2005 (7)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.c5

This is the crux. Black can no longer defend d4 in the most natural way (by means of c7-c5). The immediate threat is 4.♕a4+.

3...♘c6

The main alternative is 3...♕d5. This transposes to our main game after 4.♕a4+ ♘c6. However, Grünberg makes a strong case for the equalizing 4...♗d7 5.♕xd4 ♕xd4 6.♘xd4 e5. He therefore feels that after 3...♕d5 White should play for an advantage with 4.e3.

● 3...f6 4.♕a4+ ♘c6 5.b4 e5 6.e3 dxe3 7.fxe3 (7.dxe3 looks better for White) 7...a5 8.a3 ♗e6 9.b5 ♘ce7 10.♗c4 ♗xc4 11.♕xc4 ♕d5! 12.♕xd5 ♘xd5 13.d4 e4 and Black's game was preferable in Brustkern-B.Lengyel, Budapest 2005.

● 3...e5 is the most aggressive option. Black goes for rapid development: 4.♘xe5 ♗xc5 5.b4! ♗d6 6.♕a4+ c6 7.♘f3 b5 8.♕c2 ♘e7 (8...♗xb4 9.♗b2 d3 10.♕b3! ♗f8 11.e4) 9.♗b2 a5 10.♗xd4 and White's opening strategy was successful. Hausrath-I.Schneider, Germnay Bundesliga 2005/06.

4.♕a4 ♕d5 5.b4

5...e5

Most natural. Alternatively, Black has:

● 5...♗g4 6.♗b2 (Grünberg prefers 6.♘a3) 6...e5 7.e3!? 0-0-0 (7...♗xf3 8.gxf3 ♕xf3 9.♖g1 with compensation for the pawn) 8.♗e2 a6 9.d3 f5 10.♘bd2 ♘f6 11.e4 ♕f7 (11...fxe4 12.dxe4 ♘xe4 13.♗c4 and Black must sacrifice the knight with 13...♘xc5 14.bxc5 ♕xc5) 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 fxe4 14.♘xe4 with a nice positional edge in Vojinovic-Grkovic, Pirot 2004.

● 5...a5!? 6.b5 ♕xc5 7.♘a3 (7.♗b2) 7...♘b4 8.♗b2 e5 9.♖c1 (9.e3) 9...♕d5 10.♖xc7 ♗d6 11.b6+ ♔f8 12.♘b5 ♗xc7 13.♘xc7 ♗d7 14.♕b3 ♕xb3 15.axb3 ♖c8 16.♘xe5 ♗e6 17.♘c4 ♗xc4 18.bxc4 and due to his superior pawn structure and the pair of bishops, White had enough for the exchange. Glicenstein-Inkiov, Rosny-sous-Bois 2004.

6.e3 ♗d7

Stronger than the alternatives 6...a6 7.b5 ♕xc5 8.♗a3, and 6...♗g4 7.♗e2.

7.♘a3

Not the sharpest possibility. 7.b5 ♘d8 8.♗c4 ♕e4 9.♘c3! was Grünberg-Rahman, Cairo 2000. While 7...♕xc5 8.♘a3! ♘b4 9.♗b2 dxc3 10.fxe3 ♗d6 11.d4 ♕d5 12.♗c4 ♕e4 13.0-0-0! led to a quick victory in Grünberg-Popescu, Romania tt 1998.

7...e4 8.♘b5 ♖c8 8...0-0-0 9.♘fxd4 (9.♘xa7+? ♔b8!) 9...♘xd4 10.exd4 is better for White. **9.♘fxd4 ♘xd4 10.exd4 a6** 10...♕xd4 11.♖b1 a6 12.♘xd4 ♗xa4 is slightly better for the first player. After 10...♘f6 White can either take the pawn, 11.♕xa7, or play 11.♕a5, when in both cases he has a considerable edge. **11.♘c3 ♕xd4** 11...♗xa4 12.♘xd5 is just a pawn up for White. **12.♕b3** Enticing the bishop to e6, in view of 13.♗c4. 12.♕c2 ♗c6. **12...♗e6 13.♕c2 ♘f6** 13...♕xb4 14.♖b1 ♕xc5 15.♖xb7 ♘f6 16.♗xa6. **14.♖b1 ♗e7** Black's position looks solid in a nice classical sort of way. White now manoeuvres his knight to e3, and plays the bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal. **15.♘d1 0-0 16.♘e3 ♖cd8 17.♗b2 ♕d7 18.♖d1 ♘d5! 19.a3** 19.♕xe4 f5 with compensation. **19...f5**

20.c6! bxc6 Also playable are 20...♕xc6 and 20...♘xe3. **21.♗xa6 f4 22.♘c4 c5 23.♘e5 ♕d6 24.♗c4 cxb4 25.axb4 ♖f5** This doesn't work out very well. Equal is 25...♘xb4 26.♕xe4 ♗xc4 27.♕xc4+ ♕d5. While 25...e3 looks strongest. **26.♕xe4 ♗f6 27.d4 ♕xb4+** Regaining his pawn with check, but White has a strong central postion. Leitao must have overestimated his tactical opportunities here. **28.♖d2 ♖d6 29.h4!? f3** 29...♗xe5 30.dxe5 ♕xd2+ 31.♔xd2 ♘f6+ 32.♕d4 ♖xd4+ 33.♗xd4 ♗xc4 34.exf6 should end in a draw. **30.g3 h5?!** 30...♗xe5. **31.♗d3 ♔f8?** A very bad square for the king. **32.♘c4 ♘e7?** 32...♖a6 33.♗a3 ♖xa3 34.♘xa3 ♗xd4 35.♘c4. **33.♗a3** And White won after: **33...♕c3 34.♗xd6 ♕c1+ 35.♖d1 ♕c3+ 36.♔f1 cxd6 37.♕xe6 ♖b5 38.♘xd6 1-0**

Read SOS and Win

SOS-1, Chapter 16, p.127

The first winner of the SOS Competition was Magnus Carlsen with a devastating win over experienced GM Sergey Dolmatov in the Improved Lisitsin Gambit. White is still scoring heavily with this SOS weapon. Our next game is a curious case in point though. The first 23(!) moves can all be found in SOS-1. The game lasted three more moves. So, read SOS and win!

□ **Goran Dizdar**
■ **Sergiu-Florin Grünberg**
Triesen 2005 (7)

1.♘f3 f5 2.d3 d6

If 2...♘f6, then 3.e4, when:

● accepting the pawn sacrifice is too dangerous: 3...fxe4 4.dxe4 ♘xe4 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.♘g5. It is strange that black players still fall for this. SOS-1 mentions the game Lisitsin-Krogius, Leningrad 1949(!). There is no mercy for the ignorant. 6...e5 7.♘xh7 (7.♗xh7!) 7...e4? 8.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 9.♗xe4

and White was a sound pawn up in Belosvetov-Semiev, Alushta 2005.

● 3...d6 4.e5! dxe5 5.♘xe5 ♘bd7 6.♗f4 e6 7.♘c3 ♗d6 8.d4 0-0 9.♗c4 ♘b6 10.♗b3 a5 11.a4 ♘bd5 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.0-0. White has an edge owing to his control over the e5 square. Djuric-De Santis, Montecatini 2005.

3.e4 e5 4.♘c3 ♘f6

Black, understandably, favours this over 4...♘c6 5.exf5 ♗xf5 6.d4 ♘xd4 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.♕xd4 ♘f6 9.♗c4 c6 10.♗g5 b5 11.♗b3 ♗e7 12.0-0-0 ♕d7 13.♖he1 ♔d8 14.♖xe7!, which was Carlsen's prize winning game against Dolmatov (see SOS-2).

5.exf5 ♗xf5 6.d4 e4

Mihai Grünberg fared no better with 6...♘bd7 7.♗c4 ♗g4 8.♗e3 e4 9.h3 exf3 10.hxg4 fxg2 11.♖g1 ♘b6 12.♗d3 ♘fd5 13.♕f3 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♕h4+ 15.♔e2 0-0-0 16.a4! h5 17.a5 ♘d7 18.a6! with a clear edge in Halkias-M.Grünberg, Olomouc 2004.

7.♘h4

7...♗g4

Or 7...♕d7 8.♗e2 d5 9.♘xf5 ♕xf5 10.g4N Sulava-Kobalia, Corsica rapid 2004.

Better is 7...♗e6 8.d5 ♗f7, when SOS-1 gives 9.♘f5 and now 9...c6 is stronger than 9...♗g6 10.♘d4 (Odendahl-Van der Elburg, Amsterdam 2002).

In Laznicka-Potapov, Olomouc 2005, there followed 9.g3 c6 10.♗g5 cxd5 11.♗b5+ ♘c6 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.0-0 and in this complex position both sides have about equal chances.

8.♗e2 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 d5 White now has a forcing line which gives him superior chances. **10.♗g5 ♗b4 11.♕b5+ ♘c6 12.♕xb7 ♘xd4 13.0-0-0! ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♖b8 15.♗xf6! gxf6** Black does not get enough pawns for his piece after 15...♖xb7 16.♗xd8 ♘b5 17.♗g5 ♘xc3 18.♖de1 ♘xa2+ 19.♔d2 and White should win. **16.♕xa7 ♘b5** Or 16...♘e2+ 17.♔d2 ♘f4 and now 18.♔e3! is winning. White should also win after 16...♘c6 17.♕a4 ♕d7 18.♖he1 ♘e7 19.♖xe4. **17.♕c5 ♕d6 18.♖xd5! ♕f4+** The ending after 18...♕xc5 19.♖xc5 is an easy win. **19.♖d2 ♕xh4 20.a4! ♘d6?! 21.♕c6+ ♔f7** 21...♔d8 22.♖xd6+. **22.♕xc7+ ♔g6 23.♕xd6 ♕g5** On page 132 of SOS-1 you will find the game Löffler-Kindermann, Austria tt 2002/03, which went 23...♖b7 24.♕g3+ and White won prosaically. In this game Black's ordeal ends a lot sooner. **24.h4 ♕xg2? 25.h5+ ♔g5 26.f4+ 1-0**

No worries in the Haberditz?

SOS-2, Chapter 10, p.78

In SOS-2 Dimitri Reinderman presented the Haberditz Variation as a means to play Sveshnikov structures without all the theory. He felt that 6...h6 was not so bad, but in a postscript he added that he was a little worried about one line in particular. In recent practice, however, Black has obtained very decent results indeed, so perhaps we can allay Reinderman's fears.

□ **Nazar Firman**
■ **Georgy Arzumanian**
Kharkiv 2005 (2)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 h6

This is what the Haberditz Variation is all about. Black prevents 7.♗g5, but allows the check on d6. Here we will examine 7.♘d5 while 7.♘d6+ is the subject of the next game.

7.♘d5 ♘xd5 8.exd5 a6 9.dxc6

This is more natural than the retreat 9.♘c3, after 9...♘d4 10.♗d3 d6 11.0-0 Black should be OK.

9...axb5 10.cxd7+ ♗xd7 11.♕d5

White has a very concrete idea in mind, which turns out to be incorrect.

Black had an easy game in Daels-Nieto, Belgium 2004/05, after 11.♗d3 ♗c6 12.♕e2 ♕d5 (this is the ideal set-up for Black according to Reinderman in SOS-2) 13.f3 ♗c5 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♕xe3 0-0 16.0-0 f5.

11...♕c7 12.♗d2 Of course not 12.♗xb5? ♕a5+. **12...♕c5** After 12...b4 13.♗b5 ♗c6 14.♕c4 White has a tiny little something. Also playable is 12...♗c5 13.♗c3 0-0. **13.♕b3** 13.♕xb7 ♗c6 14.b4 ♕d5 15.♕b6 ♗d6 with excellent compensation. 13.♕xc5 ♗xc5 is already easier for Black. **13...♗e7 14.♕g3 ♗f6 15.c3 ♕d5** Simply attacking a pawn. **16.♕d3 ♕e6 17.♕b1** It is clear that White's artificial manoeuvre (♕d1-d5-b3-g3-d3-b1) has not been a success. **17...♗c6 18.♗e2 0-0** Black is also better after 18...♗xg2 19.♗xb5+ ♔e7 20.♖g1 ♕h3 but the text is stronger. White can't castle in view of the simple 21...♕d5. **19.♗f3 e4 20.♗e2 e3! 21.♗xe3 ♗xg2 22.♖g1 ♕h3 23.♗f1 ♗xf1 24.♖g3 ♕xh2 25.♔xf1 ♖fe8** Black is a pawn up, but the deciding factor is of course the position of White's king. The rest requires little comment. **26.♕d1 ♗e5 27.♖g2 ♕h1+ 28.♖g1 ♕h3+ 29.♖g2 ♖a4! 30.b4 ♗xc3** And Black won easily.

The Haberditz Variation

SOS-2, Chapter 10, p.78

Scottish IM John Shaw has given the Haberditz Variation a few outings in 2005.

□ **Hichem Hamdouchi**
■ **John Shaw**
Gibraltar 2005 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 h6 7.♘d6+

This is more critical than 7.♘d5.

7...♗xd6 8.♕xd6 ♕e7 9.♕xe7+

White has the advantage of the two bishops, and is not adverse to playing an ending. With his king in the centre and easy development Black holds some trumps too. Recently White has kept the queens on as well.

9.♕d2 0-0 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.exd5 ♘d4 12.c3 ♘f5 13.♗c4 d6 14.0-0 ♘h4! (preparing ...f5, and moving the knight to a better square – g6 and eventually e5) 15.♕e2 f5 with a comfortable Sveshnikov sort of position, Cappon-Shaw, Cappelle la Grande 2005.

9.♕d1 d6 10.♗c4 a6 11.f3 ♗e6 12.♗b3 ♘d4 13.♗e3 ♘xb3 14.axb3 0-0 15.0-0 and Black should start to prepare d6-d5, Gomez Anadon-Hernando Rodrigo, Barcelona 2005.

Previously it was thought that 9.♘b5 was strong. However, SOS-2 mentions the big improvement 9...♖b8!, when Black is fine.

9...♔xe7

10.♗e3

It is also natural to put pressure on d6 with 10.b3 d6 11.♗a3 a6 12.0-0-0 ♖d8 13.♗c4 (13.♘d5+ is a tiny edge for White according to Reinderman) 13...♗e6 14.♘d5+ ♗xd5 15.♗xd5 ♖ac8 16.♔b1 ♘xd5 17.♖xd5 ♖d7 18.♖hd1 ♖cd8 19.c4 ♔e6 20.c5 ½-½ Fercec-Runic, Ljubljana 2005.

10...d6 11.f3

Black had no problems in Vuckovic-Shaw, Cappelle la Grande 2005, after 11.h3 ♗e6 12.0-0-0 ♖ac8 13.♗c2 a6 14.g4 ♘b4! 15.a3 ♘a2+ (15...♖xc3!? 16.bxc3 – 16.axb4 ♖c7 equal – 16...♘a2+ 17.♔b2 ♘xe4 18.♗f3 ♘axc3 and two pawns are more than enough for the exchange) 16.♘xa2 ♗xa2 17.♗f3 ♘d7 18.♔d2 ♗e6 19.♔c1 g5 20.h4 f6 with equality.

11...♗e6 12.0-0-0 ♖ac8

Shaw seeks counterplay along the c-file (just as in his game against Vuckovic) rather than aiming for d6-d5. Instead, 12...♖hd8 13.♔b1 is what worried Reinderman.

13.a3 a6 14.♔b1

White has made a few useful moves, but cannot prove anything definite.

14...♘a5

Executing a typical Sicilian manoeuvre. Note that these endgame positions have little in common with the Sveshnikov.

15.g4 ♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♖xc4 17.h4 h5!

17...b5 18.g5.

18.g5 ♘d7 19.g6!? 19.♘d5+ ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖hc8 is solid too. **19...f6** There now follows a lengthy manoeuvring game. **20.♖d2 ♖hc8 21.♘e2 b5 22.♘g3 ♖h8 23.♖hd1 ♖c6 24.♖g2 ♗h3 25.♖h2 ♗e6 26.♗d2 ♘f8! 27.♖g1 ♘d7** Not 27...♘xg6? 28.♘f5+! ♗xf5 29.exf5. **28.b3 ♘c5 29.♔b2 ♘b7 30.♗e3 ♘c5 31.♖d2 a5 32.♖gd1 ♘d7 33.♖g1 ♘c5 34.♖d5!? ♔d7** There was nothing too Greek about White's gift. Black has equal chances in the ending after 34...♗xd5 35.exd5 ♖a6 36.♘f5+ ♔f8 37.♘xd6 (37.♗xc5 dxc5 38.d6 ♖a7) 37...♘d3+! 38.cxd3 ♖xd6 39.♗c5 ♔e7. **35.♖dd1 ♔e7 36.♖g2 a4 37.♗xc5 ♖xc5 38.♖d3 ♖h6 39.♘f5+ ♗xf5 40.exf5 ♖h8** The rook ending ended in a draw.

Harikrishna's Winning Novelty

SOS-3, Chapter 7, p.62

The uncompromising Blumenfeld Attack in the Scotch (6.♘b5) has an impressive following. Grandmasters such as Ponomariov, Zelcic, Nataf, Areschenko and Kritz have gone for this risky line. Positionally, White is burning his bridges behind him, but he gets great attacking chances in return. Enter Pentyala Harikrishna who beat the incredible Wang Hao (until recently the strongest untitled player in the world) with a powerful novelty in a line previously thought to be virtually winning for White. That ought to be enough to win the SOS Competition wouldn't you say?

□ **Wang Hao**
■ **Pentyala Harikrishna**
Tiayuan 2005 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗c5 5.♗e3 ♕f6 6.♘b5

This is Blumenfeld's idea. The knight attacks c7, and thereby White grabs the initiative. The exchange on e3 is forced, which means that White wilfully accepts two isolated e-pawns.

6...♗xe3 7.fxe3 ♕h4+

This intermediate check is the main line. Black can also move his king – Black is often forced to give up castling in this line: 7...♔d8 8.♘1c3 ♘ge7 9.♕d2 d6 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♘d4 ♘e5 12.♗e2 (SOS-3 mentions this line as an improvement upon N.Kosintseva-Petrukhin, Dagomys 2003). And now in Areschenko-E.Zude, Coventry 2005, White won after 12...♗c6 13.h3 h5 14.♘f3 ♔d7 15.♖hf1 ♖ae8 16.♕d4 ♘5c6 17.♕a4 ♔c8 (ironically, Black's king leaves the centre only to end up in mortal danger after White's next blow) 18.♗xa6! ♕h6 19.♗b5 ♕xe3+ 20.♔b1 ♔b8 21.♘d4! and so on, 1-0 (32).

Instead of 18...♕h6, 18...bxa6 19.♕xa6+ ♔b8 (19...♔d7 20.e5 ♘xe5 21.♘e4 and among the numerous threats is a devastating sacrifice on d6) 20.♘d4 loses faster.

8.g3 ♕d8

The alternative is to take on e4 and invite hair-raising complications. Let me keep you up-to-date with the most recent developments after the forced 8...♕xe4 9.♘xc7+ ♔d8 10.♘xa8 ♕xh1 11.♕d6 (the main option. For 11.♕g4 ♘gc7 – or 11...♕g1 – 12.♘c3 ♘e5, see SOS-3)

● 11...♘ge7?! 12.♘d2 ♘f5 (12...♕d5? 13.♕c7+ ♔e8 14.♕xc8+ ♘xc8 15.♘c7+ is a trick to remember) 13.♕c7+ ♔e7 14.0-0-0 ♖e8 15.♗d3? (overlooking a tactic, 15.♕f4! wins) 15...♕xd1+! 16.♔xd1 ♘xe3+ 17.♔c2 ♘d5 and Black won in Van der Poel-Hallebeek, Netherlands tt 2004.

● 11...♘f6 12.♘d2! ♕d5 (12...♘e4 13.♕c7+ ♔e7 14.0-0-0 ♘xd2 15.♗b5! ♕e4! is a main line as noted by Gutman – see SOS-3) 13.♕c7+ ♔e7 14.0-0-0 ♕e5? 15.♘c4 ♕xc7 16.♘xc7 ♘d8 (16...♖d8 17.♘d6± SOS-3 p.68) 17.♘d6 ♘e6 18.♘cb5 (amusingly this wins the undeveloped bishop on c8) 18...♘g4 19.♘xa7 ♘xe3 20.♘axc8+ ♔d8 21.♘xf7+ ♔xc8 22.♘xh8 ♘xd1 23.♔xd1 1-0 Kritz-Hohler, Triesen 2005.

● 11...♕e4!? Another important novelty?

– Here 12.♕c7+? ♔e7 13.♕xc8 ♕xe3+ 14.♔d1 (the only move, as 14.♗e2 ♘f6 15.♕xh8 ♘d4 loses immediately) 14...♘f6 15.♕xh8 gives White a huge material advantage, but definitely no chances for a win. 15...♘g4 (15...♘d4 is also strong) 16.c3 ♕f2 17.♗e2 ♘e3+ 18.♔d2 ♘c4+ 19.♔d1 ♘xb2+ (19...♘e3+ with a draw) 20.♔d2 ♘e5 and Black has a winning attack.

– 12.♕f8+ ♕e8 13.♕xe8+ ♔xe8, ½-½ Van der Heijden-Sula, Pardubice 2005. White's advantage is marginal after 14.♘c7+ ♔d8 15.♘d5 ♘gc7 16.♘bc3 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5.

9.♕g4

An important position for the whole line. Black has to defend against the blunt threat of 10. ♕xg7. There are three options.

9...g6

This weakens the dark squares. The merit of this move depends on Harikrishna's novelty on move 12. Alternatively, Black may try **9...♔f8** 10.♕f4 d6 11.♘1c3:

– 11...♘f6 12.0-0-0 ♕e7 13.h3 a6 14.♘d4 ♗d7 15.g4 ♖e8 16.♗g2 ♕e5 17.♖hf1 White is somewhat better. Kolev-Van den Doel, Bajada de la Virgen 2005.

– 11...♘ge7 12.♗c4 f6 13.0-0-0 was Nataf-Onischuk, Montreal 2003, see SOS-3.
– 11...♘e5 12.h3?! (12.0-0-0 SOS-3) 12...♗d7 13.♘d4 ♘g6 14.♕f2 ♕f6 15.♕g2 ♕g5 16.0-0-0 ♘e5 17.♘d5 c6 18.♘f4 h5 19.♗e2 h4 20.♘f3 ♘xf3 21.♕xf3 ♘f6 22.gxh4 ♕e5 23.♖hg1 ♖e8 24.♗d3 ♖xh4, now White blundered with 25.♖xg7? ♔xg7 26.♕g3+ ♗g4! Kristjansson-Stefansson, Reykjavik 2005.

9...g5 10.♕h5?! (10.♘1c3 d6 11.♕e2 was the stem game Ponomariov-Godena, Plovdiv 2003) 10...♘e5 11.h4?! d6! 12.♗e2 a6 13.♘d4 c5 14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.exf5 ♘f6 16.♕h6 (16.♕xg5 ♖g8 17.♕f4 ♕b6 with great compensation) 16...gxh4 17.♕xh4 ♕e7 18.♘c3 0-0-0 19.0-0-0 ♖de8 20.♕f4. White is not worse, but the stronger player won, Langer-Onischuk, Stillwater 2005.

10.♕f4 d6 11.♗c4

The most logical move, which had served White well in all previous games. In view of Harikrishna's novelty I'd advise 11.♘1c3.

11...♘e5 12.0-0

This is the point of White's play. There follows a rude awakening.

12...♗h3!N

This sacrifice improves upon the known 12...♕e7 13.♘1c3 c6 14.♗xf7+ which just wins for White, see SOS-3.

13.♗xf7+ ♔d7

Black's king is perhaps not exactly safe, but chess is a concrete game. Harikrishna intends 14...g5 followed by 15...♘h6 with a nice initiative. The extra pawn is absolutely worthless. In the game White quickly succumbs.

14.♘1c3 g5

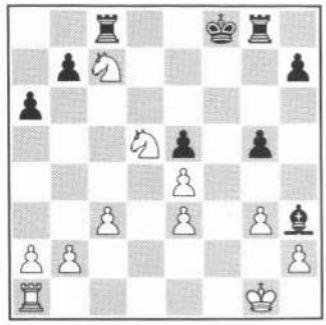
This is of course much stronger than the materialistic 14...♗xf1 15.♖xf1 ♘c7 when White has ample compensation after either 16.♘d4 or 16.♘d5.

15.♕xe5

This is a creative, but desperate, measure. Black is simply better after 15.♕f2 ♘h6.

15...dxe5 16.♖ad1+

Checking with the other rook is no better. 16.♖fd1+ ♔e7 17.♖xd8 ♖xd8 18.♗xg8 ♖hxg8 19.♘d5+ (19.♘xc7 ♖d2 is decisive) 19...♔f8 20.♘bxc7 ♖c8 21.c3 a6



and wins is what I gave on the New In Chess website for the column 'SOS Game of the Month'. Curiously enough, all this occurred in the game Swinkels-Van de Oudeweetering, Apeldoorn 2005, which continued: 22.g4 ♖g6 (even stronger than 22...♗xg4 23.♘f6 ♖xc7 24.♘xg4) 23.a4 h6 24.b4 ♖c6 25.♘b5 axb5 26.axb5 ♖xc3 27.♘xc3 ♖xc3 and Black won (on move 37).

16...♔e7 17.♘d5+

Again creative but insufficient.

17...♔f8 18.♘bxc7 ♔g7 19.g4 ♗xg4 20.♘xa8 ♘h6

And White resigned as he cannot avoid further material losses.

CHAPTER 2

Artur Kogan

A Surprising Scandinavian

The Ilundain Variation

My story starts in the grandmaster tournament of Salou (Spain). I was leading the tournament and it was important for me to make a draw with Black in the penultimate round. My opponent was IM Ramesh (India) – quite an aggressive player. Before falling asleep I was thinking about how to surprise him. I thought for more than an hour, and just before falling a sleep (usually this is how I find my novelties!) I had a great idea. Let's play the Scandinavian!

But since I had already played a few 'normal' Scandinavians in the past I decided that I would adopt 3...♕d8 this time! I will explain the reasons behind this 'absurd queen-comeback' later on.

The funniest thing was that I thought I had invented a very profound novelty. In my pride I was sure that no GM could have ever dared to play it before. The next morning my computer showed me that I was totally wrong. The names of famous GM's such as Iosif Dorfman, Ivan Sokolov, Kiril Georgiev and even top-gun Michael Adams popped up on my screen!

However, on a regular basis 3...♕d8 was mainly used by a talented young Spanish GM named David Garcia Ilundain. We became friends later on, but in 2002 he tragically died from cancer at a very young age (31). I would like to name this line after him as he used it more often than anybody else,

and even had the courage to try it against such top players as Shirov and Ponomariov. In these games he did not have any problems after the opening, demonstrating that 3...♕d8 is viable at the highest level!

□ **R.B. Ramesh**
■ **Artur Kogan**
Salou 2001 (10)

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d8!

Here my opponent looked shocked at my queen retreat, and his face even began to change colour! Of course my play was against the rules of classical chess. Don't play the queen out so early – and here Black moved his queen twice within the space of the first three moves! And what is worse, her majesty has returned to her starting position. However, the point is that White no longer has his central e4-pawn! The obvious question is 'why did the queen return to d8, and did she not move to a5 or d6?' My experience has shown me that a queen on a5, or even on d6, will be forced to move again within a few moves. A queen on a5 will be in danger after an early ♗d2. While on d6, the queen will be harrassed by moving the bishop to f4. So my counter-question is 'why lose time moving it later?'

4.d4 ♘f6

Here you can see that there is nothing new about this particular pawn structure. It is especially similar to the Caro-Kann – admittedly the pawn is still on c7 for the moment! I think that anyone with a good 'positional eye' will consider the knight on c3 to be an 'ugly piece' – especially after a future c6. The knight is blocking the c-pawn, so White cannot build a strong centre. This means that White will have to move his knight from c3 at some point in the near future. This is easier said than done though. With a pawn on c6 Black controls d5 and b5. The e4-square is usually not available, due to the knight on f6. So, here we see Black regaining his lost time (♕d8xd5-d8). At first sight, this idea looks too deep, but all the sun, sea and sand of Salou can help to make the brain stronger in order to make such discoveries! Positionally Black has a solid position and good chances to create play, especially planning natural development with ...♗f5 or ...♗g4, ...c6, ...♘d7, and ...e6. The place of the dark-squared bishop depends on White's play. Even castling (kingside or queenside) depends solely on White's set-up. Black's position is still very flexible, which means that in the future there will be many different options to surprise White with! And don't forget that White has to try and prove his advantage, and not Black. So White will be feeling the pressure! As the old Russian chess school saying goes : 'if positionally you are not happy, try to play dynamically with an aggressive plan'. This is a strong piece of advice for White – but how many people think about deep ideas or plans after just three moves?

5.♗c4

This is one of the most logical developing moves. In the next games we will investigate the other options:

– 5.♘f3 is the most common move, developing and trying to get a similar position as in the normal Scandinavian.

– 5.♗g5 planning to castle quickly to the queenside. In this way White is at least playing dynamically and using the extra tempos for a plan! In any case, it should be quite clear that the only way for White to try and refute Black's plan is by castling long and trying to attack quickly. Castling kingside will play into Black's hands, who has no weaknesses and can develop all his pieces freely. More often than not it is White who falls into trouble; as he has a slight weakness

on d4, and the knight on c3 which as I argued above is misplaced.

5...♗g4!?

I used a similar idea with great success in a 'normal' Scandinavian against GM Movsesian – the shock of this surprise led to him being lost after the opening in this game. During my preparations for my game with Ramesh I saw that the only published game with this move was by ex-world champion Karpov who had played the Scandinavian and tried this move in 1997. (It was a shame, however, that this game was against an unrated player in a rapidplay event.) As I usually do, I only checked the games of players with an Elo above 2500). However, when I came home I was curious to find out more about my ...♕d8 idea, and found that according to my database it was first played in the year 1837! Moreover, the move 5...♗g4 had already been played in 1893! 'Wow', I thought, 'this is incredible'! More interesting still: ...♕d8 was played a few times by great players such as Blackburne, Maroczy and Pillsbury, and even by the young Capablanca! It is so hard to find something new in chess these days, maybe the conclusion is that it is best to surprise your opponent with forgotten lines?

Naturally, the provocative 5...♗g4 is not the only option. Dangerous looks 5...♗f5 6.♕f3 ♕c8 7.♗f4 with an initiative. Fully playable are: 5...c6 which usually transposes to the main line after 6.♘f3 (see Shirov-Dizdarevic below) and 5...c6 followed by ...a6, ...b5 (or ...c6, and ...b5) and ...♗b7 ideas – similar to the Meran.

6.♘ge2

The most critical is 6.f3, when 6...♗f5 is the move I would recommend:

– 7.g4 ♗g6 8.♘ge2

Now I'll show you my 'secret analysis': 8...♘c6!. Following the logics of chess, Black responds in the centre in reply to White's aggression on the flank. Now a future ...e5, or even ...♘b4 and ...♘d5 will give Black excellent counterchances. A sample line is: 9.h4 h5 10.♘f4 (normal, but it falls into a nice trap! 10.g5 ♘b4! 11.♗b3 ♘fd5 is unclear) 10...♕xd4 11.♘xg6 fxg6 12.♕c2 ♘e5! (stronger than 12...0-0-0) 13.♗e6 hxg4 14.fxg4 ♖xh4!! 15.♖xh4 ♕g1+ 16.♔d2 (16.♕f1 ♘f3+) 16...♖d8+ 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 and Black is crushing his opponent.

– 7.♘ge2 e6 8.g4 (8.0-0 is not dangerous, and in this particular situation Black has 8...♘c6! keeping an eye on d4 – so the e2-knight can't even jump to g3. A subsequent ... ♗d6 gives Black nice play) is a safer move order for White.

6...e6

The oldest game in history with 5...♗g4

(that is, according to ChessBase) went in a very original but far from accurate manner: 6...♗xe2!? (probably afraid of a future f3) 7.♗xe2 g6 (a solid plan!) 8.♗f4 c6 9.♕d3 (9.♕d2) 9...♗g7 10.♗e5 (10.0-0-0 is a better idea, planning a future g4 or h4, when 10...♘d5!? is best) 10...♘bd7 11.♕g3 ♘xe5 (11...♕b6) 12.dxe5 ♘d7 13.f4 e6? (creating 'holes' for free. Much better was 13...♘c5! with a playable position) 14.♘e4 0-0 15.0-0-0, Van Vliet-Tinsley, London 1893. White has a big advantage, although he still managed to lose his way and the game later on.

7.♗g5

As I mentioned before, plans with 0-0 promise White no real advantage. This is illustrated by the following Karpov-game: 7.0-0 c6 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.h3 ♗xe2 (Karpov decides to play it 'safe', and to finish his development quickly. He gives his light-squared bishop as he does not need it in this pawn structure. He still keeps his chances for future counterplay. Instead, 9...♗f5 was also OK – and more ambitious – since there is no reason to worry about 10.♘g3 ♗g6 11.f4 because of the trick 11...♗xc2! 12.♕xc2 ♕xd4+ and the result is a healthy pawn up for Black!) 10.♘xe2! (finally the knight has left c3) 10...♘bd7 11.♕e1 (11.♗d3! to prepare c2-c4 was White's best chance to fight for something. Anyway, Black could react with a future ...e5 with equal chances) 11...♘d5 12.♗xe7 (exchanging the pair of bishops is favourable for Black. 12.♗d2 was better) 12...♕xe7 13.♗xd5?! (clearly playing for a draw against a much stronger opponent. As usual, playing for a draw is the wrong method to score (half) points. Stronger are both 13.♗b3 and 13.♗d3 keeping equal chances) 13...cxd5, as in the game Martos-Karpov, Villarrobledo 1997. Now Black's pawn structure is already a bit better, since he can organize play on the queenside, on the open c file or with a minority attack.

7...h6

To ensure that the bishop will never get to the queenside again.

8.♗h4 ♗b4

Solid enough was 8...♗e7 9.♕d2 followed by 10.0-0-0, but I wanted to prevent queenside castling. In that case, ...h6 could prove to be a weakness.

9.0-0

My plan worked! Black is better after 9.♕d3 ♗xe2! (the point!). Now it is not so attractive to play 10.♔xe2 – 10.♕xc2 ♕xd4 – when after 10...♘c6! followed by ...♕e7 and ...0-0-0 Black gets very good chances.

In reply to 9.♕d2 best is 9...♗xc2! (better than 9...c5 10.f3 ♗f5 – 10...♘c6!? – 11.0-0-0) 10.♗xe2 c5! with unclear play.

9...c6!?

Good enough was 9...0-0 10.♘e4 ♗e7, with equality.

10.♗d3

The logical 10.♘e4 ♗e7 (also possible is 10...♘bd7) gives White no real advantage.

10...♗xe2

White was planning 11.f3.

11.♘xe2 ♘bd7 12.c3

This is the best White could hope for. The knight has moved from c3, and the d4 pawn will get some support. Black's position is rock solid and hard to break!

12...♗e7 13.a4!?

13.c4 gives more chances to fight for something.

13...a5!

Now after a future c2-c4 Black will obtain the b4-square.

14.♕b3 ♕b6 15.♕xb6 ♘xb6 16.f3 ♘fd5 17.♗f2 h5!

Fighting for more space on the kingside, by ... h4 or even ...g5. Black has good chances and it is really hard for White to find a good plan. However, since a draw was a good result, I used this moment and offered it.

Ramesh agreed, disappointed that he did not manage to get an attacking position with the white pieces! In the last round I managed to win, and finished as the winner of this strong closed tournament!

After using the 'Ilundain Variation' in Salou, I decided to try it a few more times in rapid chess tournaments. I achieved good results especially when employing it against strong grandmasters as a solid surprise weapon! These days there are strong players that play this line from time to time: GM's Solak and Marinkovic (Yugoslavia), Zelcic (Croatia), Popchev (Bulgaria) and WGM Martha Fierro Baquero (Ecuador). Let's see the WGM in action against a tough GM rated 274 elo-points above her!

□ **Ildar Ibragimov**
■ **Martha Fierro Baquero**
Las Vegas 2003 (1)

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d8 4.d4 ♘f6

and now let's see another logical move for White which was already tried by GM's at the highest level – for example by Lautier!

5.♗g5 c6!

This healthy move is always useful in Black's plans. The point is to control d5, to restrict the job of the knight on c3, to open the diagonal for Black's queen to a5 or b6, and, most important, to prepare ...♗f5 (which is dangerous to play immediately because of 6.♕f3).

● Instead, 5...e6 6.♘e4!? would lead to the French Defence (which proves that 3...♕d8 is not so bad?).

● Worse, in my opinion, is how Ivan Sokolov played against Lautier: 5...♘bd7 6.♘f3 h6 7.♗h4 a6!? (Sokolov gave 7...e6 8.d5!? as promising: 8...e5 – if 8...♘b6 9.♗b5+ – 9.♗d3±. I think that 7...g6!? might be an interesting improvement) 8.♗d3 e6 9.♕e2 ♗e7 10.0-0-0 c5?! (better is 10...0-0, according to Lautier, but 11.♘e5 followed by f4 is much better for White) 11.d5! (11.♖he1 – Lautier – 11...cxd4 12.♘xd4±) 11...exd5 12.♖he1 d4 13.♗c4!, Lautier-I.Sokolov, Pamplona 1992/93.

● Also risky is 5...♗f5, falling into White's main trap(!): 6.♕f3!. With dynamic play White now creates a real attack: 6...♕c8 (6...♗xc2 7.♖c1 ♗g6 8.♕xb7 and 9.♘b5 hangs in the air) 7.♗c4 c6 8.♘ge2:

– 8...e6 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.0-0-0 (with ♘g3 or g4 coming) 10...h5 (10...♖g8 11.h3!) 11.h3!.

– 8...♗xc2 (to at least have a pawn for all the suffering) 9.0-0 ♗g6 10.♘g3 (10.♖fe1!) 10...♘bd7 11.♖fe1 ♘b6 12.♗xf6 ♘xc4 13.♗h4 ♕d7 (13...e6 14.d5!) 14.d5! with a winning lead in development, Szabo-Fuster, Hungarian Championship, Budapest 1951.

● Interesting is 5...♗g4 6.♗e2 (6.f3 ♗e6!? followed by ...c6, ...♘bd7, ...♕a5/♕b6, and ...0-0-0 seems totally playable! Black can solve the ♗f8-problem with ... h6, ...g5, and ...♗g7) 6...♗xe2 7.♕xe2!?:

– 7...♕xd4 (taking this pawn allows White too much time. Black falls behind in development to a risky degree) 8.♘f3 ♕b6 (8...♕d6 9.♘b5) 9.0-0-0, with a nice attacking position.

– 7...♘bd7 8.♘f3 c6 9.0-0-0 ♕a5 10.♔b1 e6 11.♘e5 ♗b4∞ was played by two strong Israeli masters! Gelfer-Czerniak, Israel 1974.

6.♗c4

No good is 6.♕d3?! ♕a5! 7.♘f3 ♗f5 8.♕d2 ♘bd7 9.♗c4 e6 10.♘h4 ♗b4 11.♘xf5 ♕xf5 12.♗d3 ♕a5 13.0-0 ♘d5, Certic-Marinkovic, Niksic 1997.

More in keeping with his fifth move is 6.♕d2 preparing queenside castling. 6...♗f5

is the most logical before playing e6 (also playble is 6...♗e6!? 7.♘f3 ♘bd7 8.a4 h6 9.♗f4 g5! 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.♗e2 ♘g4 12.0-0-0 ♕a5 13.♔b1 ♘b6 14.b3 0-0-0 15.h3 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 ♕b4 17.♘c1 ♕a3 18.♘d3 ♔b8 19.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 20.♔xc1 ♗c8 Pribor sky-Popchev, Prague 2005. Or even 6...e6 with the idea of 7...♗b4, but the light-squared bishop is a problem piece here. Finally, 6...♘bd7 may also be investigated) and now:

A) 7.♗xf6 is not dangerous: 7...gxf6 8.0-0-0:

A1) 8...♘d7 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 e6 planning 11...♕a5 and 12...0-0-0. Black is completely OK! He might get nice play on the open g-file with ...♖g8, and .. .f5, and ...♘f6 is another idea to press on d4.

A2) 8...e6 9.♘f3 ♘d7 10.♘h4 ♗g6 11.♕e3 ♕b6 12.♗c4 0-0-0 13.g3 f5 14.♘e2 ♗g7 15.♕a3 ♔b8 (15...♗h5∓) 16.♘f4 c5! 17.d5 ♘e5, Neelotpal-Paunovic, San Sebastian 2005.

B) A very interesting positional game – illustrating Black's potential in this structure – was played by the famous GM and trainer Dorfman. So, let's investigate Kaminski-Dorfman, Polanica Zdroj 1992, in detail: 7.♘f3 e6:

B1) 8.♘h4 leads to an equal position after 8...h6!. Black is fine after 9.♘xf5 hxg5 10.♘g3 ♗b4 11.0-0-0 (11.♕xg5 ♕xd4) 11...♕a5.

So, White should play 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.♘xf5 ♕xf5 11.♗d3 ♕a5, and now:

– 12.♘e2 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♘d7 14.c3 g6 with equal play, was played by GM Marinkovic. He soon managed to outplay his weaker opponent: 15.♔c2 ♗g7 16.♖ad1 ♘f6 17.♖hc1? (17.h3=) 17...♘g4∓ Markovic-Marinkovic, Niksic 1997.

– 12.♘e4 ♕xd2+ 13.♘xd2 ♘d7 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 15.♘c4 ♔c7 16.f4 Fernandez Aguado-Dorfman, Logrono 1991.

B2) More logical is 8.0-0-0! h6 9.♗h4 ♗b4 (or 9...♘bd7) with complex play, where Black will usually castle queenside as well, or will risk castling to the other side to counterattack the white king.

B3) 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♕xd3 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♘e2!. This is the best plan for White here, but note that the loss of time involved justifies moving the queen back and forth on moves 2 and 3! 11...0-0 12.c4 ♖c8 13.♘c3. White has more space, but Black has a comfortable position and equal chances. Usually Black's plan in such a structure is to put a rook on d8 to press d4, or to play c5 at the right moment. 13...♕a5 14.♖fe1 ♖ad8 15.♕c2 h6 16.♗h4 c5 17.♖ad1 cxd4 18.♘xd4 a6! (this is always necessary). Kaminski tried 19.♘b3?! (better was 19.♘f3 ♗b4 (19...♖c8) 20.♖e3=) 19...♕c7 20.♘e4 ♖c8 21.♖c1 ♘xc4 22.♕xe4 ♗xh4 23.♕xh4 ♘e5! (Black has obtained the ini-

tiative) 24.♖ed1 ♖ed8 25.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26.h3

26...♖d7!∓ (when Black's knight will enter on d3 White will suffer; after the immediate 26...♘d3 White has 27.♖d1) 27.♕g3 ♘d3 28.♕xc7 ♖xc7 29.♖d1 (29.♖c2 ♘b4∓) 29...♘xb2 30.♖d8+ ♔h7 31.c5 ♘a4 32.♖b8 ♔g6! 33.g3 ♘xc5 34.♘xc5 ♖xc5 35.♖xb7 ♖c2 36.a3 ♖c3 37.a4 ♖c4 38.a5 ♖c5 39.♔g2 ♖xa5 40.♖a7 ♔f6 41.h4 g5 42.hxg5+ hxg5 43.g4 ♖a3 44.f3 a5, 0-1 Kaminski-Dorfman, Polanica Zdroj 1992. An excellent endgame win!

C) Kaminski was lucky to draw against a 2200-player(!): 7.♗c4 e6 8.♘ge2 ♘bd7 9.♗b3 ♗b4! 10.f3 h6 11.♗h4 ♕a5 (and Black is better after only 11 moves!) 12.a3 ♘d5 13.♗a2 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 0-0 15.c4 ♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 ♘5f6 17.g4 ♗h7 18.♗g3 ♖fe8 19.♖he1 e5!∓ 20.dxe5 ♘xe5 21.♘d4 ♘fd7 Kaminski-Van Meter, Dallas 2001, and a draw was agreed on move 59.

D) 7.♘ge2!? e6 8.♘g3 ♗g6 9.♘ce2!? (9.h4 h6 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.h5 ♗h7 12.♘ge4 ♕d8 and Black has a great version of the Caro-Kann) 9...♘bd7 10.0-0-0 ♗d6 (10...h6!) 11.h4 (11.♘f4 ♕b6 and 12...0-0-0 is fine for Black!) 11...h6 12.♗f4 ♗e7 13.♘c3 (demonstrating that White has nothing from the opening) 13...♕a5 14.♗d3 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 0-0-0 16.♔b1 and now 16...♘b6! (16...g6?! 17.♘ge4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♘f6 19.♗e5± was Baklan-Lopez Martinez, Andorra 2001) with ...♘bd5 coming would have given Black the better chances.

6...♗f5

Also interesting is the 'characteristic' 6...♗g4 as played by the young Yugoslav GM Solak 7.f3 ♗f5 8.g4 (8.♘ge2 e6) 8...♗g6 9.h4?! (9.♕d2) 9...h5 10.♘ge2 hxg4 11.♘f4 ♗f5 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.fxg4 ♕d6! 14.♕f3 (14.gxf5 ♕xf4 15.♕d2 ♕xf5 16.♕f2∓) 14...♗xc2 15.♖c1 ♗h7 16.♘b5 ♕d7 17.♕b3 e6 and after a tough defence Black went on to win in Markovic-Solak, Budva 2002.

7.♘f3 e6 8.♕e2

8.0-0 didn't give White much in the following game by 'the expert': 8...♗e7 9.h3 ♘bd7 10.♖e1 h6 11.♗h4 0-0 12.♗d3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 ♕b6 14.♖ab1 ♖fc8 15.a3 ♖ad8 16.b4 ♘d5 17.♗g3 ♘xc3 18.♕xc3 ♕a6 19.♕b3 ♘b6, Kolev-Garcia Ilundain, Montcada 1999.

8...♗b4

A logical developing move, similar to how I played against Ramesh. I tried 8...♘bd7?! against GM Jansa (who is usually well-prepared on 'normal openings') and he was so surprised – spending time on every move – that he didn't manage to find the best moves. Play is equal after **9.0-0-0** ♗e7 10.♘e5 ♘d5!. However, the main problem after 8...♘bd7, which both of us underestimated during the game is **9.d5!** cxd5 10.♘xd5 ♖c8!? with the threat of 11...♖xc4, but 11.0-0-0! ♗e7 (11...♖xc4 12.♘xf6+ gxf6 13.♕xc4 fxg5 14.♘e5+–; 11...a6 12.♘d4 ♗g6 13.♘xe6! fxe6 14.♗xf6! and White wins! Surprisingly, I found out that all our post mortem analysis had already occurred (with a different move order) in Fedorchuk-Lopez Martinez, World Junior Championship, Yerevan 2000 – one year before my game!) 12.♘xe7 ♕xe7 13.♘d4 (13.♖xd7!? ♕xd7 14.♗b5

♖xc2+ 15.♕xc2 ♕xb5 16.♕c8+ ♔e7 17.♕xh8 ♕c4+ leads to perpetual check) with a dangerous attack.

Instead, Jansa played **9.♗b3!?** h6 10.♗xf6?! (10.♗h4 ♗e7 11.0-0-0 ♘d5! 12.♗xe7 ♘xc3!) 10...♕xf6 11.♘e4 ♕d8!? (equal is 11...♗xc4 12.♕xe4 ♗d6) 12.0-0-0 ♕c7 (refusing a draw offer) 13.♘g3:

– dangerous was 13...♗h7, since after 14.♗xe6!? fxe6 15.♕xe6+ ♗e7 16.♖he1 ♘f6 (16...♘f8 17.♕g4 g6 18.♘e5) 17.♘e5 ♖f8 18.♘f5 White has an attack.

– 13...♕f4+?! 14.♔b1 0-0-0 (14...♗g4 15.♖d3!) 15.♘xf5?! (15.d5! exd5 16.♖d4 ♗e4 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♖xe4 ♕f6 19.♖d1 g5 20.c3±) 15...♕xf5 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.♕xe5 ♕xe5 (17...♕g5!?) 18.dxe5 ♖xd1+ 19.♖xd1 ♗c5 20.f4 g6 21.g4 ♖d8 22.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 23.f5 ♔e7 24.fxg6 fxg6 25.c3 ♗g1 26.h3 ♗h2 27.♔c2 ♗xe5∓ was Jansa-Kogan, Benasque 2001. The game finally finished in a ... draw!

9.0-0 0-0 10.♖ad1 ♘bd7 11.♘e5

11...♗xc3!

A concrete decision by Black to destroy White's pawn structure and attack it with the queen!

12.bxc3 ♕a5!

Black has removed her queen from the annoying pin, and now her counterplay is clear!

13.♗b3 ♘xe5

13...♕xc3 14.♘xd7 ♘xd7 15.♗d2 ♕b2 16.♗c1 ♕c3 17.♗d2 was only a draw. Maybe she was already playing for a win?

14.♕xe5 ♕xe5 15.dxe5 ♘e4 16.♗e7 ♖fe8 17.♖d7

Superficially, White appears to be better, but:

17...a5! 18.g4!?

18.a4 b5! 19.c4 ♘c3 20.cxb5 cxb5 and Black's a-pawn will be very dangerous!

18...♗g6 19.f4

Not 19.a4 b5!.

19...a4

Also possible was 19...b5 20.f5 exf5 21.gxf5 ♗h5 22.♖e1 ♘xc3 23.c6 f6! and Black's plan of ...a4 or ...♗g4 is hard to prevent.

20.♗c4 b5 21.♗d3 ♘xc3 22.f5 exf5 23.gxf5 ♗h5

White has some compensation for the pawn, but no more than that.

24.♖e1

Or 24.a3 ♘d5 25.♗d6 ♖ad8!.

24...♘d5 25.♗c5 ♘f4 26.♗f1 ♖ad8!

Also good was 26...♗g4!? 27.♖d4 ♘h3+!.

27.♖xd8 ♖xd8 28.♗d6 f6

Black managed to stop White's temporal initiative, and now, by breaking the centre, she gets a technically winning position. The rest hardly requires any comment.

29.c4 fxe5 30.c5 ♖e8 31.♗xe5 ♗f7?!

Immediately winning is 31...♗g4! 32.♖e4 ♗xf5!.

32.a3 ♗c4 33.♔f2 ♗xf1 34.♗xf4 ♖xe1 35.♔xe1 ♗d3 36.♗d2 ♔f7 37.♔f2 ♗xf5 38.♔e3 g5 39.♔d4 ♔g6
And Black won this opposite-coloured bishop ending.

And now let's see a very interesting game where one of the best chess players 'lost his head' against the ♕d8 Scandinavian!

□ **Alexey Shirov**
■ **Emir Dizdarevic**
Calvia ol 2004 (12)

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d8 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3
This is the most popular move and the main line. Black now faces a wide choice. I would advocate either the plan with ...c6 and ...♗g4/♗f5, or the plan with ...c6, ...b5 and ...♗b7 (which is how Dizdarevic beat Shirov in our main game).

5...c6
● Kiril Georgiev has successfully played 5...♗g4 6.h3:
6...♗xf3 7.♕xf3 c6 8.♗e3 e6 9.0-0-0 (here it is safer to play 9.♗d3 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♖ad1 ♕a5 12.♕g3 0-0 13.♕h4 ♕h5 14.♕xh5 ♘xh5 15.♘e4 ♘hf6 16.c3± Aronian-Collas, Cannes 1996) 9...♗b4 10.♗d2 (not 10.♗c4 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♕a5) 10...0-0 (10...♕xd4?! is too risky after 11.♘b5!) 11.g4?! (11.♘e4 ♗xd2+ 12.♖xd2 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♘d7 leads to an equal position) 11...♕xd4 12.♗d3?! ♘bd7 13.♗f4 (13.g5? ♘e5!∓) 13...♕b6 (White has lost a pawn and still has to cope with the opponent's attack) 14.♘e2 ♖fd8 15.h4 (15.g5 ♘d5 16.♕h5 ♘f8∓) 15...♕a5∓, A. Kovacevic-Kir.Georgiev, Belgrade 1997.
Riskier is **6...♗h5** 7.g4 ♗g6 8.♘e5 e6 9.♗g2! c6 (9...♘d5 10.♘xd5 exd5 11.♕e2±) 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♕e2 ♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘d5 (12...♘d7 13.f4!) 13.♘e4 ♗xe4 14.♕xe4 ♗c5 15.a3 a5 16.♖d1 (not the best option) 16...♕h4 17.♕e2 h5! 18.c4 hxg4 19.cxd5 gxh3 20.♗f3 ♗xf2+! 21.♕xf2 h2+ 22.♔f1 h1♕+ 23.♗xh1 ♕xh1+ 24.♔e2 ♕h5+ 25.♕f3 ♕xe5+∓ Hitzgerova-Duran, Klatovy 1997.
● Also normal is 5...♗f5 and here the world's number 1 played the simple 6.♗d3!? (6.♘e5 c6) 6...♗xd3 7.♕xd3 c6 8.♗g5 e6 9.0-0-0 (castling as soon as possible) 9...♘bd7 10.♘e5 ♘xe5 (10...♕a5! is an improvement here) 11.dxe5 ♕xd3 12.♖xd3 ♘d5 13.♘e4 b5 14.♖hd1 h6 15.♗h4 g5 16.♗g3 0-0-0 17.h4 ♗e7 18.h5!± with a small positional advantage that he managed to convert after demonstrating the technique of a great champion. Even more incredible is that this was a blitz game! Kasparov-Serper, Internet ICC 1998.
● Once I even thought about 5...♗e6!? which prevents 6.♗c4. The plan is to finachetto the other bishop. This has not been tried in practice, so let's see who will be the first one to employ it!
● 5...g6 was played quite a few times by the creative WGM Chelushkina: 6.♗f4 (6.♗g5 ♗g7 7.♕d2 c6 8.a3?! h6 9.♗f4 ♗e6 10.♗e2 ♘bd7 11.♘e5 ♘d5 12.♘xd5 ♗xd5 13.0-0 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 g5 15.♗g3 ♗e6 was equal in Vasquez Ramirez-Chelushkina, Bled 2002; 6.♗c4 ♗g7 7.h3 c6 8.♗f4 ♘bd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘b6 11.♗b3 a5 12.a3 ♘bd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.♖e3 a4 15.♗a2 ♖e8 16.♕e2 ♗d7 17.♖e1 ♕b6 18.c3 ♗b5 19.♕c2 e6 and draw agreed in Savic-Chelushkina, Belgrade 2002) 6...c6 7.♕d2:
– Now 7...♗g7 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.♗h6 b5! gives Black counterattacking chances.
– Objectively worse is 7...♕a5?!, an interesting 'psychological move'. It should frighten White out of playing 8.0-0-0. 8.♗c4 ♗g7 9.0-0 ♕d8! (9...0-0? 10.♘d5!+—) and now the queen retreats for the second time to d8, having done its job of scaring White into

castling kingside! 10.♖fe1 0-0 11.♕e2 b5 12.♗b3 a5 13.a3 e6 14.♘e4 ♘d5 15.♗d6±. Later on she managed to outplay her opponent and win. Stiazhkina-Chelushkina, Rethymnon 2003.

6.♗c4

White prevents 6...♗g4, because of 7.♗xf7+, and prepares ♘e5 with an initiative as in the normal Scandinavian with 3...♕a5.

The alternative is 6.♘e5!? when

– 6...♗e6!? followed by 7...g6 will give Black a solid position with nice counterchances since all his pieces cooperate well.

– It is also possible to offer White the main line with 6...♗f5 since after 7.g4 (7.♗c4 e6) there is 7...♗e6! and ...g6 to follow.

Thirdly, Leko played 6.♗g5!? but gained no edge after 6...♗g4 7.♗xf6 exf6 8.♗e2 ♗b4 9.♕d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.a3 ♗a5 12.♘d2 ♗e6 13.♘c4 ♗c7 when both sides have chances, Leko-Adams, Frankfurt 1999.

6...b5!?

This original move was first introduced into practice by the Yugoslav IM Zdravko Vukovic in 1994. Since then this has become his pet line against 1.e4. I can recommend this line for adventurous players. Incidentally, Ilundain played this too, with good results.

Also playable is the odd 6...e6!? planning ...b5, and if 7.a4!? then 7...b6!, solving the problem of the c8-bishop.

Dangerous is 6...♗f5 7.♘e5 e6 8.g4!, but only against a well-prepared opponent! 8...♗g6 9.h4!.

This is the principal move:

● Objectively best is now Adams' move: 9...♘bd7!? 10.♘xd7 (10.♕e2 ♗b4!) 10...♕xd7 11.h5 ♗c4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗e3 was played in Lutz-Adams, Frankfurt 1999. Now an interesting improvement might be 13...♘d6!? (13...0-0-0!? 14.c3± or the complex; 13...♗b4+!? 14.c3 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 16.♔f1 ♗xa1 17.♕xa1 0-0-0 White is probably better, but it's still a matter of taste I guess) 14.♗d3 (14.♗b3 a5 15.a4 ♗e7 and ...0-0 and ...b5 to follow) 14...♘b5!? 15.c3 ♘c7 with the idea of ...♘d5, when Black is solid.

● 9...♗e4!? 10.♘xe4 (10.0-0 ♗d5!) 10...♘xe4 11.♕f3 (11.♘xf7 ♔xf7 12.♕f3+ ♘f6 13.g5 ♕xd4 seems OK for Black) 11...♘d6 seems a bit better for White.

● Very complex is 9...♗b4. I played it a few times, but only as a surprise weapon. Maybe, I should call it pure bluff! I'll show you what I mean:

Possible is **10.h5** ♗e4 11.f3 ♗d5 12.♗d3. The 'normal' way to play for 'theoretical players' is **10.♖h3!?**, basing themselves on the theory of 3...♕a5. 10...♘bd7 11.♕e2 ♘b6!. This is Black's main point! With the queen on d8, instead of a5, pawn d4 is hanging! Black gets very strong counterplay after

12.h5 ♗e4:

Bad is 13.g5? ♕xd4 14.gxf6 ♕xe5 15.fxg7 ♖g8 16.♖e3 (16.h6 ♘xc4−+) 16...♖xg7! winning.

In the last round of Lisbon Open 2001 I decided to surprise the Dutch GM Harmen Jonkman. This worked very well, since I got the better position right after the opening when he played: 13.♗d2?! ♕xd4 14.♘xe4 ♕xe5?! (14...♕xb2! 15.♖d1 ♕xe5 was even better) 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 16.♗xb4 ♘xc4 17.♗c3 ♕xe2+ 18.♔xe2 e5∓, Jonkman-Kogan, Lisbon 2001.

The strongest move is 13.♗f4!, and now:

– 13...♘xc4 14.♘xc4 (14.♕xc4 ♘d5!) 14...♗xc2!? (worth considering is 14...♗g2!? 15.♖g3 ♘e4) 15.♗e5 ♗a4 16.h6! ♖g8 17.hxg7 ♖xg7 18.♕f3 ♖g6 19.g5! ♕d5!, Inarkiev-Kogan, Moscow 2002. I won in the end, but White missed his best chance here with: 20.♗xf6! ♕xc4 21.b3! ♕xc3+ 22.♕xc3 ♗xc3+ 23.♖xc3 ♗b5 24.♖h3±.

– 13...♕xd4 14.♖d1 ♗d3! (a great move by David that gives Black the advantage!) 15.♖hxd3 ♕xf4 16.♖d4 (16.♘xf7? ♕xc4 17.♘xh8 ♔e7) 16...♕h2 17.♘xf7 0-0 18.♗xe6! (18.♕e5 ♕xe5+ 19.♘xe5 ♘bd5∓), Ponomariov-Ilundain, Pamplona 1996/97. Now the game continued with 18...♘bd5!? 19.♕e5!. Black missed that after 18...♖xf7 19.♖xb4 (19.♖d8+ ♖xd8 20.♖xd8+ ♗f8∓) he has 19...♖c8! 20.♖d3!? (Ponomariov) 20...♔f8! 21.♖e3 ♖fe7 and only White can be in trouble here, as he can hardly move.

However, the big problem with 9...♗b4 is **10.f3!!**. This move I had found already during my home preparation for Ramesh, and it took me several hours to be convinced that Black is almost lost. But, at the same time, I couldn't imagine that somebody would find all this very soon. In fact it was found in the same year!

White wins after 10...0-0 11.h5! ♗xc2 12.♕xc2 ♕xd4 13.f4! and so on.

White also gets a tremendous position after 10...♘d5 11.♗xd5! (L.Perez) followed by 12.h5.

Finally, tempting is 10...♗xc2?! 11.♕xc2 ♕xd4. Unfortunately, White has the incredibly strong 12.♕e2!!. The game Perez-Lopez Martinez, Varadero II 2000, continued: 12...♗xc3+ (12...b5?! 13.♘xf7!) 13.bxc3 ♕xc3+ 14.♔f2 ♕xa1 15.♖d1! ♕c3 (15...b5 16.♗a3+−) 16.♗b2! ♕b4 17.♘xf7! 0-0 (17...♘c4+ 18.♕xe4!+−) 18.♗xf6!+− gxf6 19.♕xe6 ♕c3 (19...♔g7 20.h5! h6 21.♕f5) 20.♖d8 (20.♘g5+! ♔h8 21.♕f5+−; 20.♕e7+−) 20...♘d7 (20...♖xd8 21.♘e5+ ♔g7 22.♕f7+ ♔h8 23.♕xf6+ mate) 21.♖xa8 ♕d4+ 22.♔g2 ♕d2+ 23.♔h3 ♔g7 24.♕e7! ♕f4 25.♘g5+ 1-0.

7.♗b3 e6

Playing for a kind of Meran is especially suitable for Slav Defence players! Black wants to play . ..♗b7 and ...c5 as soon as possible. White has a big choice, but Black's position seems very solid.

8.♗g5

More natural is the idea of **8.0-0** ♗e7 9.♘e5 (moving the knight from c3 allows a quick ...c5: 9.♘e2 0-0 10.c3 c5! 11.♘e5 ♗b7 12.♗e3 ♘bd7 Sofronic-Vukovic, Bucharest 2000. Here we see that Black has no problems at all, and he can be confident in the future) 9...0-0 10.♗g5 a5! 11.a4 (11.a3!?) 11...b4. Now Black is finally ready for ...c5! In the meantime he has staked out some space on the queenside. 12.♗xf6? (trying to complicate things, but this sacrifice is insufficient. 12.♘e2 c5 13.dxc5 ♕c7 14.♘d3 ♘bd7 and Black is OK, as in similar positions in the Meran) 12...gxf6 13.♕h5 fxe5 14.♖ad1 ♕e8 15.♘e2 f5! 16.♕h3 e4−+ and only a miracle later on saved White in Ivanovic-Vukovic, Niksic 1994.

8.♘e5 ♗b7 9.♕e2 ♗e7 10.a4 0-0! 11.axb5

cxb5 12.♕xb5 ♕xd4 13.♗e3 ♕b4 equal in Sveshnikov-Khairullin, Krasnoyarsk 2003.

8...♗e7 9.a4!?

This was played by no less than the mighty Shirov! Even such a great player can fall into a 'psychological trap', and try to refute the line with aggressive play.

9...b4 10.♗xf6!? gxf6!

Less attractive is 10...♗xf6 11.♘e4± since Black needs to control the c5-square for the future ...c5 break.

11.♘e2 ♘a6!?

Dizdarevic continues in provocative style! Imagine Shirov's feelings at this point. Instead, 11...♗b7 followed by ...♕d6 and ...♘bd7 (and finally ...c5) was good enough for Black to equalize.

12.♕d2 h5!?

Preventing ♕h6.

13.0-0-0?!

Here 13.0-0 was a better idea to fight for the advantage, but Shirov probably wanted to try and punish his 'provocative opponent'.

13...♘c7 14.♘e1 ♘d5 15.♘d3 ♕a5 16.f4 f5

Superficially, White looks better, but in fact Black can defend easily. White is basically out of good ideas: how do you break through to Black's king? In the meantime Black can improve his position, and prepare the 'dream break' ...c5.

17.♘e5 ♗b7 18.♔b1 ♖d8 19.♕d3 ♗f6 20.♖he1 c5!

Black is already slightly better. It is important to mention the safe place of Black's king in the centre. White's king is far less safe on b1!

21.♘g3 ♔f8!

White was clearly unhappy with his position and now tried to complicate things with:

22.dxc5 ♘c3+ 23.bxc3 ♖xd3 24.♖xd3 ♗c8!

Possibly, it was this strong defensive move that was missed by Shirov. His attack is finished and Black will escape with his extra material.

25.c6 bxc3 26.♘xf5!

A great idea by Shirov, but Black is still better after all.

26...exf5 27.♘d7+ ♔g7 28.♖g3+ ♔h6 29.♘xf6 ♗e6 30.♖e5 ♕b4 31.♘d5

31.♖b5 ♕d4!∓ (31...♕xf4 32.♘g8+) with ...♕d1 coming up.

31...♗xd5 32.♖xd5 ♖e8 33.♖d1 ♖c8 34.♔a2 ♖xc6 35.♖d8 ♔h7 36.♖gg8 ♕xf4 37.♖h8+ ♔g7 38.♖hg8+ ♔f6 39.♖d7 ♕c1 40.♖xf7+ ♔e5 41.♖e8+ ♔f4 42.g3+ ♔g4 0-1

A great win by Dizdarevic, proving that Ilundain's variation is fully playable. It is an excellent surprise weapon, rich in ideas, and even against much stronger players you can go for the win.

CHAPTER 3

Jeroen Bosch

The Alapin Opening

1.e4 e5 2.♘e2

□ **Alexey Kornev**
■ **Mieczyslaw Bakalarz**
Warsaw Ech 2005 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘e2

Why on earth should White play such a modest second move? True, 2.♘e2 qualifies as a developing move, but it inhibits the natural development of the light-squared bishop and forgoes the opportunity to grab the initiative (as does 2.♘f3). Black is given free rein to continue as he pleases: 2...♘c6, 2...♗c5 and 2...♘f6 are the most logical replies. From a practical point of view it is not so bad, though, to give your opponent such a freedom of choice so early in the game. Especially when you are well-prepared to meet his next few moves, you might gain valuable time on the clock. However, it is not only the surprise effect that Kornev was counting on when he confronted his opponent with 2.♘e2.

Unlike after 2.♘f3 White may still hope to realize f2-f4 within the next couple of moves. Strategically, this advance is of course highly desirable: exchanging the white f-pawn for Black's e-pawn would result in a central majority. White simply aims to play the King's Gambit without the gambit. There are clear similarities to the Vienna line 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.f4 (when 3...d5 4.fxe5 ♘xe4 is the normal continuation). Nor

should we forget that White has in no way committed himself to the f4 plan yet: he might still play for d2-d4 as well. Considering the rich history of the Open Games I suppose no one will be surprised to learn that 2.♘e2 is not a modern invention. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the outstanding theoretician Simon Alapin played it in numerous games, scoring some fine results with his opening too. These days, Alapin's name is mostly connected to his 2.c3 against the Sicilian, but avid SOS readers may remember a previous column on 1.d4 f5 2.♕d3!? – another creative Alapin idea.

2...♘f6

Bakalarz replies in the most natural way. Since White has omitted to attack e5, Black in his turn now seeks to grab the initiative by attacking White's e-pawn. There are several minor alternatives to consider:

● **2...♕h4** is far too extreme, of course. After 3.♘bc3 ♗c5 4.g3 (4.d4) 4...♕f6 5.d4 exd4 6.♘d5 White was better in Alapin-Albin, Berlin 1897.

● **2...f5** 3.exf5 is the King's Gambit reversed with a useful tempo up (1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 ♘e7 is playable against the most venerable of gambits): 3...d5 4.d4 e4 5.♘g3 ♘f6 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.♗xf6 ♗xf6 8.♕h5+ ♔f8 9.c3, and White was better in Alapin-Süchting, Berlin 1897.

● **2...d6** is slightly passive, and I don't think that you will encounter this often in practice. Still, Philidor players will be tempted to continue in this way. Now 3.d4 is a sound move, of course, but if you want to play in the spirit of Alapin go for 3.f4.

● **2...d5** is played by those who want to punish you immediately for playing such a passive move. They should be reminded, though, that after 3.exd5 ♕xd5 (3...♗c5 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♕xd5 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 ♗b4 8.♘b5 ♕e5 9.♕d4 was slightly better for White in Plater-Brzozka, Lodz 1954) 4.♘bc3 ♕a5 we have reached an odd sort of Scandinavian in which White may have developed his knight somewhat passively at e2, but Black has weakened his position with the 'active' ...e5. White should be better after either 5.d4! or 5.g3, followed by ♗g2, 0-0, d3, and so on.

● **2...♗c5** is a good move that deserves to be investigated more seriously. After 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 we have the Scotch game. However, Black can exploit the Alapin move order by postponing ...♘c6. There isn't much wrong with 4...d6, while 4...♘f6 5.♘b3 is even better (after 5.♘c3 Pillsbury played 5...d5 against Alapin, Vienna 1898, which is fine, as is the surprising 5...♘xe4 6.♘xe4 ♕e7, and the natural 5...0-0).

From the diagrammed position Black's simplest option is 5...♗b6 6.♘c3 0-0, with good development. Riskier is the greedy 5...♘xe4 6.♗d3 (6.♘xc5 ♘xc5, with insufficient compensation) 6...♕e7 7.♕e2 ♗b4+ 8.c3 ♘c5!, as given in the tournament book of Vienna 1898. For, as Denis Druash (who has written a monograph on the Alapin Opening) has noted, Alapin now intended to play 9.♗e3 ♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 ♗d6 11.♘1d2 0-0 12.0-0-0, with obvious compensation. The whole line is tricky (prepare well and you may gain some points), but suspect. How-

ever, considering how little White achieves after 5...♗b6 and considering the fact that you cannot avoid the Scotch after 3.d4, there is not much point in playing 3.d4. You might as well prepare the Scotch proper in that case.

The ambitious 3.c3 (after 2...♗c5) at least gives the line a special Alapin ring. It worked well in Alapin-Halprin, Vienna 1898: 3...♘c6 4.d4 ♗b6 5.f4 ♘f6 6.fxe5 ♘xe4 7.♘d2 and so on. However, don't get too enthusiastic about 3.c3. In my opinion 3...d5 is an excellent answer.

White cannot expect to gain an opening edge after 4.d4 exd4 5.cxd4 ♗b4+. Several sources indicate 4.cxd5 ♕xd5 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b4+ 7.♘bc3, and so on. They forget to mention the stronger 5...♗b6! (Plater-Sefc, Bratislava 1957), with equality.

In practice Alapin was successful with the risky 3.f4. Objectively Black is OK after 3...d6 4.c3 ♘f6! 5.d3 ♘c6. Alapin continued his analysis with 6.h3 ♘h5 7.g3, which is anything but a confidence booster.

That leaves 3.♘bc3 as White's final try after 2...♗c5. After 3...♘c6 4.♘a4 we transpose into the next note. Black should go 3...♘f6, when 4.d4?! exd4 5.♘xd4 is fine for Black, as we have already seen. See below the note to Bakalarz's third move for more information on this position.

● **2...♘c6** is not bad either, of course, after 3.♘bc3 (3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 is the Scotch again, while 3...d6 is also possible) 3...♗c5 (3...♘f6 is the main game) White can have some fun by playing his knight to the rim: 4.♘a4.

Black should continue 4...♗e7 (4...♗b6 5.♘xb6 hands White the bishop pair for free), and now 5.d4 gives White some space advantage:

– 5...exd4 6.♘xd4 ♘f6 (6...♗f6 7.♗e3 ♘ge7 8.f4 d6 9.♕d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 ♘g6 11.♘f5 ♗e6 12.g4 ♕e8 13.g5, with an attack, Plater-Dittmann, Krynica 1956) 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5, which compares favourably to a main line in the Scotch, as Black cannot play 8...♕e7.

– 5...d6 6.d5 ♘b8 7.♕d3 f5?! (simply 7...♘f6) 8.exf5 ♕d7 9.♘ac3 ♕xf5 10.♘g3 and from this position Alapin scored 2-0 against Marco. 10...♕xd3 (a year later Marco opted for 10...♕f7 11.♗e2 ♘f6 12.♗e3 0-0 13.f3, but again he could not be pleased with the outcome of the opening. Alapin-Marco, Vienna 1898) 11.♗xd3 ♘f6 12.♘f5 ♗xf5 13.♗xf5, with a slight edge due to the bishop pair in this queenless middlegame, Alapin-Marco, Berlin 1897.

– Best is perhaps 5...♘f6 6.d5 ♘b8 7.♕d3 (7.f3) 7...d6, with approximate equality as in Alapin-Chigorin, Berlin 1897.

3.♘bc3

In line with Alapin's main idea behind 2.♘e2 is 3.f4!?, which is why this line deserves some space.

● 3...♘xe4 4.d3 ♘c5 5.fxe5 d5 (5...d6!?, as played by Mason against Alapin in Monaco 1901, is not bad either) 6.d4 ♘e6 or 6...♘e4 are both objectively OK for Black. Still, there are quite a few (old and new) games which suggest that these positions are full of play. To cite two modern examples:

– 6...♘e4 7.♘d2 (7...♘xd2 8.♗xd2 ♗g4 is equal, according to Keres) 7...♗f5 8.♘xe4 ♗xe4 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.♗d3 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.0-0 ♗g5 13.♕d2 ♗xe3+ 14.♕xe3 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 0-0 16.♖f4 ♘e7 17.♖af1 ♘g6 18.♖4f2 ♕d7 19.♘f5 a5 20.♕g3 ♕e6 21.♕g4 ♔h8 22.h4 ♖g8 23.♘e3! ♕xg4 24.♘xg4 ♘xh4 25.♖xf7, and White won the ending easily. Cubas-Asfora, Ilha Solteira 2003.

– 6...♘e6 7.♘f4 (7.g3 is Pigusov's recommendation) 7...c6 (the stronger 7...c5 was played by Rubinstein against Alapin, Vienna 1908) 8.♘c3 ♗e7 9.♗e3 ♘xf4 10.♗xf4 ♗f5 11.♗d3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘f8 14.♖f3 ♕d7 15.♖af1 ♘g6 16.♘d1 0-0 17.♘e3 f6 18.♕f5 ♕e8 19.♕e6+ ♖f7 20.♗g3 ♔h8 21.h4 ♘f8 22.♕g4 ♗d8 23.h5 h6 24.♗h4 ♘h7 25.e6, with a large advantage in Cubas-Gretarsson, Bled Olympiad 2002.

● 3...d5 4.fxe5 ♘xe4 is likely to transpose to the above line.

Crucial for the evaluation of 3.f4 is

● 3...exf4 4.♘xf4, when White has set the trap 4...♘xe4? 5.♕e2 ♕e7 6.♘d5 ♕e5 7.♘bc3, and wins.

Black has an equally cunning reply in 4...♕e7!?, forcing White to sac a pawn. Druash now favours 5.d3 d5 6.♗e2 dxe4 7.0-0, but Gerard Welling (in an extensive article on the Alapin in *Kaissiber 2*) prefers Alapin's suggestion of 5.♗e2 ♕xe4 6.0-0 ♗c5+ 7.♔h1 0-0 8.♘c3, and so on.

However, the reason why I would prefer Kornev's 3.♘bc3 to 3.f4 is the boring equalizer 4...d5 (so after 3.f4 exf4 4.♘xf4) 5.♘xd5 ♘xd5 6.exd5 ♕xd5 7.♘c3 ♕e5+. A dubious attempt to raise the stakes is 5.♕e2!?; after 5...♗e7 (5...dxe4 is the acid test of Cubas's idea) 6.♘xd5 ♘xd5 7.exd5 ♕xd5 8.♘c3 ♕d8 9.d4!? 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.0-0-0 ♗f5 12.♕b5 ♕d7 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♖xd3 a6 15.♕h5 ♘b4 16.♖dd1 c6 17.d5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 cxd5 19.♕xd5 ♕xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖ad8 Cubas-Neubauer (Santos 2003) was quickly drawn. FM Cubas from Paraguay has some interesting ideas in the 3.f4 line.

3...♘c6

Here 3...d5 4.exd5 ♘xd5 5.♘xd5 ♕xd5 6.♘c3 ♕d8 7.♗c4 looks a little better for White. Bakonyi-Benko, Budapest 1948, continued 7...♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 ♘c6 10.f4.

3...♗b4 is like a Ruy Lopez reversed (the 3...♘ge7 variation). White can play 4.g3 or 4.♘g3 as in the 3...♘ge7 line, or he can play the 'Bird-move' 4.♘d5.

3...♗c5 is again natural and good.

Some research suggestions:

– 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 has been dealt with above (2...♗c5).

– 4.f4 is best met by 4...d6, threatening 5...♘g4, and White has merely weakened his own position.

– 4.g3 could easily transpose to the Vienna game with g3. Tactically White must hope to survive after 4...♘g4 5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 and now 6...♕f6 (6...♘xf2 7.♔xf2 ♕f6+ 8.♔e3!? needs to be investigated too) 7.♕xg4 ♗xd4 8.♘d5 ♕xf2+ 9.♔d1 is very strong for White. It reminds me of the Vienna line: 1.e5 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.♕g4 ♕f6 5.♘d5 ♕xf2+ 6.♔d1. A word of caution, though: after 1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 ♗c5 you would not seriously consider 4.♘ge2, but simply play 4.♗g2.

– 4.♘g3. Objectively, this modest move promises no advantage, of course. 4...d5 5.♗e2 ♗e6 6.d3 c6 7.f4 exf4 8.♗xf4 dxe4 9.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕d2 ♘d7 13.d4 ♘f6 14.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15.c3 ♕a5 16.♗e3 ♖ad8 17.b4 ♕c7 18.♖xf6! gxf6 19.♗h6, and the exchange sacrifice has yielded White a tremendous position. Bakonyi-Szily, Budapest 1948.

4.f4

So here we are – the main point of 2.♘e2. Black now strikes back in the centre with

4...d5

This is the main line, but Chigorin's 4...exf4 is a reasonable alternative. As 5.♘xf4 is met strongly by 5...♗c5, White goes 5.d4 ♗b4 (5...d5) 6.d5 (6.e5 is bad after either 6...♘e4 or 6...♘d5) 6...♘xe4 7.♗xf4 ♗xc3+ (7...♘e7 8.♕d4 ♘xc3 – 8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♘f6 transposes – 9.bxc3 ♗d6 10.♕xg7 ♘g6 11.♗xd6 cxd6, and now 12.♘d4 and 12.g3 are better for White, but the forcing 12.♘f4 yields nothing after 12...♖f8 13.♘xg6 fxg6 14.♗d3 – 14.♕xh7 ♕f6 – 14...♕e7+ 15.♕xe7+ ♔xe7) 8.bxc3 ♘e7 9.♕d4 ♘f6 10.c4 d6 11.♘g3 ♘f5 12.♘xf5 ♗xf5 13.♗e2 0-0 14.0-0 ♕d7, and now Black won easily after 15.♗d3 ♗xd3 16.cxd3 ♖fe8 17.h3 ♘h5 18.g4 ♘xf4 19.♖xf4 ♖e2, etcetera. Alapin-Chigorin, Vienna 1898. Instead of 15.♗d3 Levenfish gave 15.♗g5 ♘e8 16.♖ae1 f6 17.♗h4 as better for White (ECO). Clearly there is a lot more to be said about 4...exf4.

5.fxe5

This is more promising than 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.fxe5 ♘xe5 (also good is 6...♘xc3, as played by Harmonist) 7.d4 ♘g6 (7...♘xc3! Bücker, which is why White should prefer 7.♘xd5) 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.♘f4 ♕e4+, as in Alapin-Caro, Vienna 1898. Instead of Caro's equalizing final move, Stefan Bücker has correctly noted that White has to watch out after 9...♘xf4 10.♗xf4 ♗e6.

5...♘xe4 6.d4

6...♗e7?!

Although natural, this move is a little passive. However, we can hardly blame Bakalarz for not knowing the ins and outs of 2.♘e2. Keres has analysed 6...♗b4 7.♗d2 ♗g4 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.c3 ♗e7 (9...♗a5?!

10.♕c2 ♗f5 11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.♗e3 0-0 13.0-0-0 was very nice for White in Bakonyi-Exner, Hungary 1923) 10.♕c2 ♗f5 11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.♗e3 (not 12.♘xe4?! ♕d5 13.♗d3 ♘xe5! 14.dxe5 0-0-0!) 12...0-0, which he gives as equal. Nevertheless this is quite an interesting position.

A word of caution, though. In an editorial remark in *Kaissiber 2* Stefan Bücker significantly improves upon this analysis with the straightforward suggestion of 7...♗xc3! 8.♗xc3 f6.

7.♘xe4 dxe4 8.c3

White has set up a strong centre, which Bakalarz now attacks with

8...f6?!

More sound is 8...♗f5.

9.♘f4! ♗f5

Here 9...0-0 10.♗c4+ ♔h8 11.♕h5 ♕c8 12.exf6 clearly gives White something to play for. Not 9...fxe5? 10.♕h5+ ♔d7 11.dxe5.

10.exf6 ♗xf6 11.♕b3

This prevents castling and attacks b7. With simple play Kornev has obtained a superior position.

11...♕d6

Sacrificing a pawn to change the unsatisfactory course of events.

12.♕xb7 ♖b8 13.♕a6

Black has a huge edge in development, but White's position is too strong.

13...e3

This leads nowhere, but with correct play neither does 13...0-0 14.♗c4+ (14.♗e2) 14...♔h8 15.♗b3!?, but not 15.0-0?! ♖b6 16.♕a4 ♗xd4+ 17.cxd4 ♖b4.

14.♗xe3 0-0 15.♗c4+ ♔h8 16.0-0 ♖xb2

17.♗d5

Even better was 17.♘d3!.

17...♖b6 18.♕c4 ♘e7 19.♗f3 ♗c8 20.♕d3 ♗a6 21.c4 ♖b4 22.♖ac1 ♗g5

Stronger was 22...♖b2 or 22...♖a4.

23.♘d5 ♗xe3+ 24.♘xe3

White is a very sound pawn up.

24...♖d8 25.♖fd1 ♕f4??

A blunder in a bad position. Here Bakalarz resigned before Kornev could execute the winning 26.♕a3

CHAPTER 4

Sergey Volkov

Attacking the Slav Stonewall

Let's play 5.g4

White often avoids the sharp Noteboom Variation with 4.c3 – aiming for the Meran. This move order allows Black, in turn, to avoid the Slav altogether and build a Dutch Stonewall. In this article I would like to discuss the sharp and double-edged 5.g4. Note that this approach is possible after 3.♘c3, and, more surprisingly, after 3.♘f3 as well!

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■ **Konstantin Landa**
Perm 1997 (7)

— — —

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e3
Avoiding the Noteboom after 4.♘f3 dxc4.

4...f5
Black makes use of the Slav move order to transfer into a Dutch Stonewall where White has committed himself to a set-up with an early e3.

5.g4!?
With this logical attack with his knight's pawn, White plans to break up Black's monolithic pawn centre. The main drawback of the plan is that time for development is lost.

5...♘h6
An unusual idea in such positions. In the event of gxf5 Black plans to place his knight at f5 with gain of tempo, and his pawn remains at e6, defending d5.

6.g5

A pawn sacrifice. In the event of 6.gxf5, the line 6...♘xf5 7.♗d3 ♕f6 8.♘f3 ♗d6 9.e4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.exd5 ♕e5+ leads to an equal position. Interesting is 6.h3, maintaining the tension, when the knight at h6 has no future. White can continue his development with ♘f3 after castling by Black. If the pawn is captured, White obtains an attack. For example: 6.h3 ♗d6 7.♗d3 0-0 8.♘f3 (or 8.♗d2) 8...♘d7 9.♕e2 with a pleasant edge.

6...♕xg5

After 6...♘f7 7.h4 White gains space on the kingside and the knight at f7 still has to come into play via d6.

7.e4 ♕f6

White keeps an opening advantage after 7...♕e7 8.♗xh6 gxh6 9.♕h5+ ♔d8 10.e5.

8.exd5 exd5 9.cxd5 ♗d6 10.♕e2+ ♔d7!

11.♗xh6?

White gives up an important bishop for a knight that still needed time to come into play. The dark squares become completely weak, and all the same 0-0-0 is not possible. Playable was 11.♕f3 ♖e8+ 12.♗e2. The ending after 11.♕e6+ ♕xe6+ 12.dxe6+ ♔xe6 13.♗xh6 gxh6 14.0-0-0 is equal. Best, however, was 11.♕d3 ♖e8+ 12.♘ge2±.

11...♕xh6 12.♘f3 ♖e8 13.♘e5+ ♔c7

White misses his dark-squared bishop and is slightly worse.

14.♗g2 ♘d7 15.f4 ♕xf4 16.dxc6 ♕h4+ Here 16...bxc6 would have retained threats to the king, which has nowhere to hide after 17.♗xc6 ♕h4+ 18.♔d1 ♕xd4+ 19.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 20.♔xd2 ♗xe5 21.♗xa8 ♘b6∓. **17.♔f1 ♕f4+ 18.♕f3 ♕xf3+ 19.♗xf3 bxc6 20.♗xc6** Much better was 20.♘xc6! ♗a6+ 21.♔g2±. **20...♗xe5 21.♗xa8 ♗a6+ 22.♔g2 ♖xa8 23.♘d5+** Not 23.dxe5 ♗b7+. **23...♔d8?** The ending is won after 23...♔d6! 24.dxe5+ ♘xe5 25.♘f4 ♗b7+ 26.♔g3 ♗xh1 27.♖xh1 g5. **24.dxe5** Now it all reduces by force to an endgame which turns out to be drawn. **24...♗b7 25.♖hd1 ♘b6 26.♔g3 ♘xd5 27.♖xd5+! ♗xd5 28.♖d1 ♔e7 29.♖xd5 ♔e6 30.♖a5 g5 31.h4 h6 32.♖a6+ ♔xe5 33.♖xh6 g4 34.♖a6 ♖d8 35.♖a5+ ♔e4 36.♖a4+ ♔e5 37.♖a5+ ♔e4 38.♖a4+ ♔e5 39.♖a5+ ½-½**

This game demonstrated the viability of the 5...♘h6 variation, but so far this idea has not been employed again.

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Elista ch-RUS 2001 (4)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 ♘f6

The most critical continuation. Black disregards the break-up of his pawn centre and continues his development. After 5...fxg4?! 6.♕xg4 ♘f6 7.♕g2± the queen stands very well at g2. There is pressure on the g-file and, above all, the d1-square is vacated for White to play 0-0-0.

Thus after 7...♗d6 8.♗d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 White is somewhat better according to Tal Shaked. Sharpest is 7...c5, when Seirawan-Yermolinsky, Key West 1994, went: 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗d2 a6 10.0-0-0 ♕c7 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12.♖g1 with again a slight edge for White.

6.gxf5 exf5 7.cxd5?!

An inaccuracy. White spends time on the break-up of the centre, but he is unable to force Black to recapture with the pawn, after which there would be a weakness at d5. Stronger is 7.♕b3 ♕b6 8.cxd5 ♕xb3 9.axb3 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 cxd5 11.♗g2 ♘c6, and now, not 12.♗xd5? ♘b4, but 12.♘e2 with a pleasant ending for White.

7...♘xd5

Of course, Black recaptures with his knight, retaining a good pawn structure.

8.♘ge2 ♗e6 9.♗g2 ♘a6!

Black wins the struggle for the d5-point.

10.0-0 ♘ac7 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.f3?!

White obstinately continues fighting for the d5-point. White could have kept his disadvantage at a minimum with: 12.♘c3 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♗d6 14.♖b1 ♕e7 15.♕a4 0-0 16.c4.

12...♗d6 13.e4 ♕h4!

By tactical means Black refutes White's plan.

14.♘g3 ♘f4 15.d5 cxd5 16.exf5 ♗f7 17.♖e1+ ♔f8 18.♗e3 h5 19.♕d2?

White should have sought salvation in the following sequence of moves: 19.♗f1! ♕f6 20.♕d2 h4 21.♘e4 dxe4 22.♗xf4 ♗c5+ 23.♗e3 ♕xf5 24.fxe4 ♕g5+ 25.♔h1 ♗xe3 26.♖xe3 equal.

19...♕g5!

The opportunity for White to disentangle himself has been missed.

20.♖ad1 ♔g8 21.♕f2

More chances were offered by 21.♔f2 h4 22.♖g1 hxg3+ 23.hxg3 ♖c8 24.gxf4 ♕xf5∓.

21...h4 22.♘e4 dxe4 23.♖xd6

Time trouble is the reason that White is continuing this game – Black did not have much time left.

23...♘h3+ 24.♔f1 ♗c4+ 25.♖e2 ♕e7 26.♗xh3 ♕xd6 27.♔e1 ♗xe2 28.♕xe2 ♕d3 29.fxe4 ♕xe4 30.♗g2 ♕b1+ 31.♔f2 ♕xf5+ 32.♔g1 ♖h5 33.♕c4+ ♔h8 34.♗xb7 ♖f8 35.b4 h3 36.♕c1 ♖g5+! 0-1

This game shows that even a slight delay allows Black to maintain his pawn centre and

complete his development. The weakening of White's kingside was also felt. However, White should not have foregone the chance to play 7.♕b3.

We have seen that with the knight on c3 it is entirely possible to go for 5.g4. More adventurous still, is to play this advance with the knight on f3!

□ **Sergey Volkov**
■ **Mikhail Kobalia**
Kazan 2005 (6)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 e6 4.e3 f5

I don't know why Kobalia chose the Dutch Defence – usually he plays more reliable Slav set-ups.

5.g4!?

Even more daring than with the knight on c3.

5...fxg4

A reflex move. Of course, 5...♘f6 was more accurate. See the next game.

6.♘e5 ♘f6 7.♘xg4 ♗e7

Black tries to attack the f2-point (with a subsequent ♗h4), but by a precise move order White forestalls the opponent's plans.

8.♗d3! 0-0 9.♖g1

9...♕e8

A strange move. Black prevents White's attack on the kingside (by controlling h5), but wastes some important tempi, which, in my view, is more significant.

10.♘c3 ♘xg4 11.♕xg4 ♗f6 12.♕g2

Black threatened 12...e5, and g2 is not a bad square for the queen. There was also 12.♕h3 (forcing g6), but I couldn't decide whether this move was necessary: 12...g6 'intending' 13.♗xg6 hxg6 14.♕h6, but such ideas are hardly realisable without the pieces being developed.

12...♘d7 13.♗d2 ♘b6 14.c5

After 14.cxd5 exd5 Black should not have any problems. Therefore the only way of fighting for an advantage is to continue the 'squeeze'.

14...♘d7 15.f4 ♕h5

Black prevents 0-0-0, but White finds a very strong move. It is possible that better chances were offered by 15...b6 16.cxb6 axb6 17.0-0-0 ♗a6 18.♗c2 ♗c4.

16.♕e2! ♕f7

If Black exchanges queens 16...♕xe2+, then after 17.♔xe2 he has serious problems (the rooks defend each other), since White is able to maintain his centre: 17...b6 18.b4 a5 19.a3.

17.b4

After 17.0-0-0 there follows 17...b6, but if Black allows it, why not maintain the centre? (the king also feels alright at e1).

17...b6 18.♖b1 a5 19.cxb6!

Of course 18.♖b1 was not played in order to retreat – 19.a3 axb4 20.axb4 ♖a3, and 21...bxc5 22.bxc5 ♘xc5 is threatened.

19...axb4 20.♖xb4 ♗b7 21.♖b2

The position is quite sharp, but White has an extra pawn, for which Black does not appear to have any compensation.

21...♖fd8

Defending against the threat of ♘b5-d6 after 22...c5.

22.♕g4 c5 23.♘b5 ♘f8 24.♗c3 ♗a6 25.a4!

In this position I had 8 minutes left, while Misha had 25. My play is fairly simple: the position appears to be 'hanging', but with my last move I consolidate it, while my opponent tries unsuccessfully to create some threats.

25...♕e7 26.a5

Now the b6-pawn is defended, and in addition Black's pressure on the a-file is neutralised – if ♗xb5 there is ♖xb5. It is interesting that the white king stands very well at c1 – there are many open lines, but it does not disrupt the coordination of the white pieces.

26...♖dc8 27.♔e2 g6

Black cannot find anything to do – and he gives White new targets to attack. 27...♕d7 28.♘a7 ♗xd3+ 29.♔xd3 was possible, but here there is no longer any acceptable move – something has to be given up.

28.h4! ♕g7 29.h5

White's play is easy and natural.

29...cxd4

What Black has been engaged in over the last few moves is not clear. White has done everything that he wanted: both defended his b6-pawn and created play on the kingside. The game is largely decided.

30.♗xd4 ♗xd4 31.exd4 ♗xb5 32.♖xb5! ♖c3 33.hxg6 h5

Black cannot create a single problem: from b5 the rook keeps the a-file under lock and key and, especially important, also the b2-square.

34.♕g3 ♕xd4 35.g7 ♘g6 36.♕xg6

Black resigned.

□ **Vladimir Grebionkin**
■ **Sarhan Guliev**
Nizhny Novgorod 1999 (5)

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 c6 3.c4 e6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 ♘f6

The most critical continuation. Black continues his development, disregarding the break-up of his pawn centre.

6.gxf5 exf5

There is a difference compared with the variation where White plays an early ♘c3. All the same the b1-knight goes to c3, where it exerts pressure on d5, but there the g1-knight can be developed at e2.

7.♘c3 ♗b4

Here 7...♗e6 looks more natural. After 7...♗b4 in the end Black will have to take on c3, giving up his strong bishop.

8.♕b3 ♕e7 9.♗d2

9...dxc4?!

Black weakens his centre, although for the moment he was not forced to do this. After 9...♗e6, there may follow 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♗c4. Other interesting options are: 10.0-0-0 and 10.c5.

10.♗xc4 b5 11.♗e2

But here 11.♗d3 was more active, attacking the f5-pawn in case of 11...♗e6 12.♕c2.

11...♗e6 12.♕c2 0-0 13.♘e5

Possible was 13.♘g5!?

13...♗xc3?!

Why give up the bishop if this is not forced?

14.♗xc3 ♗d5 15.♖f1

Tactical complications arise after 15.f3!? ♘g4! 16.fxg4! ♗xh1 17.0-0-0 ♗e4 18.♗d3 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 fxg4 20.d5 b4 21.♕c4 cxd5 22.♖xd5 with compensation.

15...♘e4 16.f3

Stronger is 16.♗a5!?, to preserve the bishop.

16...♘xc3 17.♕xc3 ♕e6

An unnecessary move. Black is better after 17...♘d7!.

18.a4 bxa4 19.e4 fxe4 20.fxe4 ♖xf1+ 21.♗xf1 ♗xe4 22.♖xa4

Stronger was 22.♕h3!.

22...♘d7 23.♗h3 ♗f5 24.♗xf5 ♕xf5 25.♕c4+ ♔f8 26.♕xc6?

It was essential for White to think about his king. Play would have been equal after 26.♕b4+ c5 27.♘xd7+ ♕xd7 28.♕xc5+ ♔g8. After the text Black is just better.

26...♖e8 27.♖a5 ♘xe5 28.♕d6+ ♔g8 29.♖xe5 ♕b1+ 30.♔d2 ♕xb2+ 31.♔e3 ♖f8 32.♕e6+ ♔h8 33.♖f5??

This loses immediately, whereas other continuations would have retained practical chances of a draw: 33.♕d6 ♕f2+ 34.♔d3, or 33.♕d7! ♕xh2 34.♕xa7.

33...♕c1+ 34.♔e4 ♕e1+ 35.♔f4 g5+ 0-1

CHAPTER 5

Jaan Ehlvest

The Dutch Benoni

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5!?

I have been playing the Leningrad Variation of the Dutch Defence all my life – I even wrote a book about it. During my early career I was a very aggressive player. This changed, however, when I started playing against the world elite around 1987. At that point, my opening repertoire underwent a complete transformation. At the highest level, there are not so many openings one can safely play. I do not quite believe, of course, that it goes so far as in the story when somebody asked Kramnik why he played the Petroff Defence and he answered that all others are simply not good enough. I think you can play all classical openings; they are called classical because decades of practice have shown that they are playable. After switching to solid openings I realized, however, that sometimes you just need to take risks, such as when you are playing a less experienced opponent, or when you have to win with the black pieces. To that end, sometimes one can do some odd things very early in the game.

I first got the idea of 1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5!? from the game Yermolinsky-Shabalov (you can find this game, as well as other games I will refer to, later in this article), although it was first used a long time ago by Saint Amant in his match against Staunton in 1843. There it didn't fare well and was forgotten for more than a century (although it was used sporadi-

cally by non-elite players). At the beginning of the 1990's it was popularized by English GM Jonathan Levitt, who called it the Clarendon Court Defence and used it on a number of occasions against strong opposition. It has also been used by a few other strong GMs, mostly as a surprise weapon. Of course, the mix of the Dutch Defence and the Benoni move c7-c5 cannot be positionally sound. The main setback, as I see it, is that you make a commitment about your pawn structure too early in the game. This gives your opponent an option to develop his pieces so that they are placed most effectively against your set-up. The big plus of this continuation, however, is that it is rarely used and even very strong players can be outplayed by a well-prepared opponent, like in the game Lputian – Tukmakov. In my own practice, I used this line a number of times and achieved some successes with it, although I suffered a major setback in the game against Izoria, where a simple plan starting with 4.f3 worked well for White. Still, I may play this variation again in the future against the right opponent. Even if you do not consider seriously playing risky lines like this for Black, I believe it is worthwhile for any 1.d4 player to study this variation, as you may always encounter an aggressive opponent who will play it against you, and you don't want to be caught unprepared! In general, as noted by Nimzowitsch, studying any specific kind of chess positions improves your overall understanding of chess. I hope that this article will help you in your progress. Enjoy!

□ **Anjelina Belakovskaia**
■ **Jaan Ehlvest**
Stratton Mountain 1999 (2)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.g4

This uncommon sacrifice does not create any real problems for Black. Another rare move that I would like to mention is 3.b3, which happened in a grandmaster game Stefansson-Jakubiec, Aarhus 2003, where White failed to obtain any advantage after 3...e5 4.dxe6 d5! 5.♗b2 ♗xe6 6.c3 ♘f6 7.♘h3 ♘c6 8.♘f4 ♗f7 9.♗d3 g6 10.♗b5 ♗g7 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘d2 ♕b6 14.♘f3 ♖ad8 15.♕c1 d4, and Black has excellent play in the centre. What connects these two moves (3.g4 and 3.b3) is that in both cases White does not seem to have a plan that effectively utilizes Black's potential weaknesses in the centre. After all, pawns do not move backwards, and after 1...c5 and 2...f5 the squares d6 and e6 may lack protection in the future. Once Black moves one of the central pawns in the normal course of development (say, d7-d6), e6 may become a glaring weakness. The game Izoria-Ehlvest is a good example of this, and Black needs to be very careful to avoid such positional problems. On the other hand, leaving the pawn on d7 may lead to other problems, as in the game Yermolinsky-Shabalov.

3...fxg4 4.e4

Another possible move is 4.h3, but after 4...g3 5.fxg3 e6 6.dxe6 d5! (a typical idea for Black in this variation) White has no advantage.

4...d6 5.h3 ♘f6 6.hxg4 ♗xg4
The greedy 6...♘xe4? 7.♗d3 ♘f6 8.g5 is very bad for Black.
7.f3 ♗d7 8.♘h3 ♘a6 9.♘g5 ♕b6 10.♘d2 h6

11.♗h3
This puts White's pieces in an uncomfortable situation, but even after other moves, e.g. 11.♘c4 ♕c7, Black has nothing to fear. The weakness on e6 in this line is fully compensated by the extra pawn and potentially weak position of the white king.
11...♗xh3 12.♖xh3 ♘c7 13.c4 ♖g8
Here I could have tried 13...e5!? 14.dxe6 ♗e7, when White's pawn on c6 would not last long. **14.♕a4+ ♔d8 15.♘e6+**
Maybe it was better for White to take her chances with 15.♘f7+ ♔c8 16.f4, and if 16...g5, then 17.e5 with active play. After the move in the game it is White who has a weakness on e6, which would be especially pronounced in the endgame.
15...♘xe6 16.dxe6 g5 17.♘f1?! ♕c6
17...g4 was probably a good move here, but I just wanted to get into a comfortable endgame where I can quickly win a pawn. The remainder of the game is mostly technical. **18.♕xc6 bxc6 19.♘e3 ♖g6 20.♗d2 ♘e8 21.e5 ♖xe6 22.exd6 ♘xd6 23.0-0-0 ♔e8** And Black converted his material advantage.

□ **Andrey Belozerov**
■ **Jonathan Rowson**
Tallinn Ech-jr 1997 (11)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.c4
This move is quite popular. White wants to support the centre before playing ♘c3.
3...♘f6 4.♘c3 g6 5.g3 d6 6.♘h3 ♘bd7 7.♘f4
This active move actually limits White's play on the kingside. A better idea is the following set-up for White that effectively meets the g5 advance used by Rowson in this game: 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♖b1! ♘e5 10.b3 a6 11.a4 ♕e8 12.♗d2 b6 13.♔h1 g5 14.f4! gxf4 15.♘xf4 and White has a long lasting positional plus. Black cannot dream of any active play because of the strong knight on f4.
7...♘e5 8.♗g2 ♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.b3 a6 11.a4 ♕e8 12.a5 g5
Now Black has counterplay on the kingside.
13.♘d3 ♘xd3 14.♕xd3 ♕h5 15.f4 ♗d7 16.♖b1 gxf4 17.gxf4
Or 17.♗xf4 ♘g4 18.h3 ♘e5 19.♕d2 ♘g6 and if now 20.♗e3, then 20...♗e5.
17...♔f7

18.b4 ♖ac8 19.bxc5 ♖xc5 20.♖xb7 ♖fc8 21.e3 ♖xc4
Black is gradually outplaying his opponent. White's problem is that he had no clear plan

of action after the opening, whereas Black was consistently activating his pieces.

22.♘e2 ♕g6 23.♗a3 ♖c2 24.♖c1

Here Rowson probably didn't like the simple 24...♖xc1+ 25.♗xc1 ♗b5 because of 26.♖xb5 and the passed pawn on a5 may become dangerous, although Black is likely still better. In any case, he comes up with an interesting (and possibly correct) tactical solution.

24...♖8c3!? 25.♕xc2

After 25.♕xa6 the best move is the unexpected 25...♖d2!! (Fritz) 26.♖xc3 (otherwise ♖xa3 or ♖xe3 will win for Black) 26...♖d1+ 27.♔f2 ♘g4+ 28.♔f3 ♗f6! with an unstoppable threat of ♘xh2+ and ♗h4. I doubt that Rowson had that in mind. The more human 25...♗c8 26.♖xe7+!? (26.♕xd6 ♖xc1+ 27.♘xc1 ♖xc1+ 28.♗xc1 ♗xb7) 26...♔xe7 27.♕xd6+ ♔f7 28.♕e7+ ♔g8 29.♕d8+ ♘e8 seems to work, too.

25...♖xc2 26.♖xc2 ♘xd5 27.♖xd7?

This is bad, and Black now wins quickly. After 27.♗c1 ♗a4! 28.♘g3 (moves with the c2 rook fail for tactical reasons) 28...♕e6! Black is also better. The best chance was 27.♘g3 ♘xe3 28.♖e2! (not 28.♖cc7 ♗d4 and White's king is in trouble) 28...♕e6 (what else?) 29.♗c1 ♗d4 30.♗xe3 ♗xe3+ 31.♔h1 ♗b5 32.♖xb5 axb5 33.♘f1 ♕c4 34.♖xe3 ♕a2 35.a6 ♕xa6 36.♗d5+ with practical chances.

27...♘xe3 28.♘g3 ♘xc2 29.♗xd6 ♔e6 30.♖xe7+ ♔xd6 31.♖xg7 ♕f6 32.h4 ♘e3 33.♖xh7 ♘g4 34.♖h5 ♕d4+ 35.♔h1 ♕d1+ 0-1

□ **Iztok Jelen**
■ **Vladimir Tukmakov**
Bled 1995 (6)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5

This is a reasonable approach. White wants to take on f6 and double Black's pawns, which in most Dutch structures (after f7-f5) is a good positional plan.

4...♕b6 5.♖b1

5.♕d2 was played in a number of games. In Alburt-Levitt, New York 1994, Black played 5...h6 and White obtained some advantage after 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.0-0-0 d6 8.e4 due to better development. Another possibility for Black is the principled 5...♕xb2!?, which lead to an unclear position after 6.♖b1 ♕a3 7.♗xf6 gxf6 8.e3 in Verat-Summerscale, Cannes 1996.

5...h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.♘f3?!

The immediate 7.e4, not giving Black time to develop, looks better here.

7...g5 8.e4 g4 9.♘d2 d6 10.♗b5+ ♔d8!

Typical for this line. The black king is quite safe in the centre.

11.exf5 ♗xf5 12.0-0 ♗g7 13.♗d3 ♘d7 14.♘c4 h5 Black has a good position. **15.♖e1?!** This move unnecessarily weakens the f2 square, which Black uses immediately. **15...♖f8 16.♕d2 ♗xd3 17.cxd3 ♕f4** Black would have a pleasant endgame after 18.♕xf4 due to the weakness of White's doubled pawns. **18.♕c2 ♘e5?!** The natural 18...♗d4 was strong. **19.♖e4 ♕f5 20.♘e3 ♕g6 21.b4 cxb4 22.♖bxb4 b6 23.♘b5?!** White should have played 23.d4 ♘f7 24.♖c4 ♘g5 25.♖c7!, when Black's king suddenly starts feeling uncomfortable. **23...♖c8 24.♕b1 a5 25.♖b3 ♗h6 26.♘f1??** A terrible blunder. After any normal move (say, 26.♘d4), White is still okay. **26...♖c1** If the queen retreats now, ♘f3+ will lead to a quick mate. **27.♕xc1 ♗xc1 28.♘d4 ♔e8 29.♖xb6 ♕f6 30.♖b8+ ♔d7 31.♖xf8 ♕xf8 32.♘e6 ♕a8 0-1**

□ **Smbat Lputian**
■ **Vladimir Tukmakov**
Tilburg 1994 (3)

In commenting this game, I have made use of some annotations by Igor Stohl.

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♕b6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.e3

Taking on f6 on move 5 was a reasonable novelty for White, saving time on moves like 5.♖b1 in the previous game, which limited White options for castling. The last move, however, may be a little too slow. White could try using his advantage in development in the line 6.e4 fxe4 7.♕d2.

6...g6

A better alternative was 6...d6 7.♗b5+ (7.♘b5 ♔d8!) 7...♘d7. After the text White could have obtained a better game after 7.d6! ♕xd6 8.♕xd6 exd6 9.♘b5 ♘a6 10.0-0-0.

7.♗c4 d6 8.♘ge2 ♘d7 9.♘f4 ♘e5 10.♕e2 ♗h6 11.h4 0-0 12.a4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 b6

Both sides are finishing their development, and the position is complicated and unclear.

14.g3 a6 15.0-0 ♗d7 16.♘e6 ♖fb8

Black wants to play b5, but White may be able to prevent it.

17.♖fb1 ♔f7 18.♘f4 ♖b7 19.♕d3 ♖c7 20.♖a2 ♗g7 21.♔g2 ♖cc8 22.♕e2 ♗h6 23.♖ba1 ♔g8 24.♖a3 ♕f7 25.♔g1

In this closed position, both sides are manoeuvring their pieces, waiting for the right moment to open up the game.

25...♗g7 26.♖b3 ♖cb8 27.♕c4 ♗e5 28.♕e2 ♖a7 29.♔g2 h6 30.♖h1 ♖aa8 31.♕d3 ♗xc3?!

Finally Black decided to grab a pawn, and at the wrong moment. This was the chance to play 31...b5 32.axb5 axb5 33.♘xb5 ♗xf4 34.exf4 ♗xb5 35.♖xb5 ♖xb5 36.♕xb5 ♕xd5+ 37.♔h2 with an even position.

32.♖xc3 ♗xa4 33.g4?

Much better was 33.e4! ♗b5 34.♕e3, after which White's attack is dangerous, and the opening of the e-file is a serious positional threat. Even in the deep middlegame, the weakness of the e6 square may be a serious factor in this variation.

33...♗b5 34.♕d1 fxg4 35.♕xg4 ♔h7 36.♖h3 ♖g8 37.♘e6? This was the last

chance for White to play 37.e4 with initiative. **37...♕f5!** Now Black forces a queen trade with a much better endgame. **38.♕xf5 gxf5+ 39.♔f3 ♖g4 40.♘f4 ♗d7 41.♖a3 a5 42.c4 ♔g7 43.♖h1?** This is a tactical blunder, although even after the best 43.♔e2 White's position is not easy to hold. **43...e5! 44.dxe6 ♗c6+ 45.♘d5 ♖xc4** Now Black is winning. **46.♖d3** After 46.♖d1 ♖b4 Black also wins easily. **46...♖e8 47.♖g1+ ♔h7 48.♔e2 ♖xe6 49.♔d2 ♖xh4 50.♘f4 ♖f6 51.♔c3 0-1**

□ **Alexander Matros**
■ **Jaan Ehlvest**
Stockholm 1998/99 (5)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.e4!?
This pawn sacrifice is similar to the Staunton Gambit in the Dutch (1.d4 f5 2.e4).
3...fxe4 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.g4
This move is much more dangerous than the early 3.g4.
5...g6!
The variation 5...h6 6.g5 hxg5 7.♗xg5, where White will soon castle long with a strong attack, did not look good to me, although 7...♕b6 might be worth studying.
6.g5 ♘h5 7.♘xe4 d6
Now the g5 square is not available for White and the weakness on e6 is therefore well protected. The position is double-edged and White should play 8.♗g2 now. Instead he went for simplification – this is what I was afraid of before the game.
8.♘g3 ♘xg3 9.hxg3 ♘d7 10.♘h3?!
White should have played 10.f4! ♗g7 11.♗d3, and 11...0-0 is dangerous because of 12.♖xh7 ♔xh7 13.♕h5+ ♔g8 14.♗xg6.
10...♕b6 11.f4? This is a definite error, after which Black is doing well. After 11.c3 White is probably still somewhat better.
11...♕b4+ 12.♔f2 ♕d4+ 13.♗e3 The endgame after 13.♕xd4 cxd4 is better for Black as he will have strong play on the c-file, but the pawn sacrifice is too optimistic. This game illustrates what can happen if you are playing an unfamiliar opening variation. **13...♕xb2 14.a4 ♗g7 15.♖b1 ♕a2 16.♘g1 ♘b6 17.♗d3 ♔d8!**

Parrying the threat of ♖xh7 and the king is on its typical square. **18.♘e2 ♕xd5 19.c4 ♘xc4 20.♗xc4 ♕xc4 21.♖c1 ♕e4 22.♗xc5 ♗g4 23.♘c3 ♕f5 0-1**

□ **Nikolay Popov**
■ **Valery Zhuravliov**
Beltsy 1979

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.e4 fxe4 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.f3
For 5.g4 look at Matros-Ehlvest above. 5.f3 is another reasonable way to sacrifice a pawn for a long-term initiative. Taking it leads to an uncomfortable position for Black, so exploring other options is worth looking at. One move that happened a number of times in practice is 5...d6, but there is no clear verdict. The game Stefanova-Miton, Spain 2005, continued 5...d6 6.fxe4 a6 7.a4 g6 8.♗e2 ♗g7 9.♘f3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘g4 11.♕e1 ♘d7 12.♕h4 ♘de5 13.♘e1 ♖xf1+ 14.♔xf1, and a draw was agreed. It seems

though that after 13.♗g5! (instead of 13.♘e1?!) White has a better game.

5...exf3 6.♘xf3 g6 7.♗d3 d6 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.♕e1 ♘bd7 10.♕h4 a6

Black keeps the king in the centre because after 10...0-0 11.♘g5 ♘c5 (11...c4!? 12.♗xc4 ♘e5, Fritz) 12.♖xf6 ♖xf6 13.♕xh7+ ♔f8 14.♘ce4 ♖f5 15.♗e2 or 15.g4 White has a strong attack.

11.♗h6 ♖g8 12.♖ae1

12.♗xg7 ♖xg7 13.♘g5 looks stronger here.

12...♗xh6 13.♕xh6 ♕b6 14.♔h1 ♕xb2

Now Black has gained a second pawn, which may provide sufficient compensation for his lack of development. **15.♕e3 ♖g7 16.♕h6 ♖g8 17.♕e3 ♖g7 18.♕h6 ♖f7** This refusal of a draw is not really justified, because White is better after his next move. **19.♘g5 ♘e5 20.♖xe5 dxe5 21.♘xf7 ♕xc3** Now 22.♕g7! would have given White a very strong attack. Instead the game went: **22.♘d6+?! ♔d7 23.♘c4 ♘xd5 24.♕xh7 b5 25.♖d1 ♗b7 26.♘b6+!?** Objectively best is 26.♘d2, where White still has compensation. The sacrifice, however, provides practical chances. **26...♘xb6 27.♗e4+ ♗d5** It turns out that even stronger is 27...♘d5! 28.♕f7 (or 28.♗xd5 ♗xd5 29.♖xd5+ ♔c6 30.♖d1 ♕xc2) 28...♔c7! 29.♗xd5 ♖d8! 30.♕xe7+ ♖d7 and Black should win. **28.♗xd5 ♘xd5 29.♕f7 ♔c7 30.♕xd5 ♕xc2 31.♕xe5+ ♔b6 32.♕e6+ ♔a5 33.♕e1+ b4 34.♖c1 ♕f5 35.♕xe7 ♖c8 36.h3 c4?!** This gives White the chance to open up the position of Black's king with 37.a3! bxa3 38.♕xa3+, with a likely draw. **37.♖e1?! ♖c5 38.♕d8+ ♔a4 39.♕d1+ ♔b5 40.♖f1 ♕d3** Black is winning. **41.♕c1 ♖d5 42.♕f4 c3 43.♔h2 ♔a4 44.♕f7 c2 45.♖c1 ♖c5 46.♕f2 ♖c6 47.♕f7 ♕d6+ 0-1**

□ **Zviad Izoria**
■ **Jaan Ehlvest**
Batumi Ech 2002 (11)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.f3!?

In the previous games White played 4.e4 at once. Here my opponent, not willing to sacrifice a pawn, is preparing this advance with the logical pawn move, which had been played a few times before this game.

4...g6?!

This, however, is a dubious novelty. The move I made does not pay enough attention to White's plan, which is to play e2-e4 with the idea of e5, and if Black answers d6, take the pawn on f5, after which the e6 square becomes a perfect outpost for white knights in the middle of my position. In case of the previously tested 4...e5 Black still has problems after 5.e4 fxe4 (5...f4 6.g3 is positionally good for White) 6.fxe4 a6 7.♘f3 d6 8.a4 and square e6 is still weak. I think Black should try 4...e6 5.dxe6 (5.♗g5 h6) 5...d5 here.

5.e4 d6?!

At least 5...fxe4 6.fxe4 d6 kept my kingside pawns connected.

6.♗b5+ ♗d7

In case of 6...♘bd7 White can continue as in the game.

7.exf5 gxf5 8.♘h3

Now White has big positional advantage.
8...♘a6 9.♗xa6! bxa6 10.0-0 ♗g7 11.♘e2!

Both knights are moving toward e6!
11...0-0 12.♘ef4 h6 13.c4 ♘e8 14.♔h1 ♗d4 15.♕e2 ♔h7 The problem of my position is that I have too many weaknesses and no counterplay, having to wait for White's attack. A strong grandmaster should win such positions for White easily, which is demonstrated by my opponent. **16.♗e3 ♗h8 17.♖ae1 ♖f7 18.♕d2 ♖b8 19.b3 a5 20.♘e6 ♗xe6 21.dxe6 ♖f6 22.♗xh6! ♘c7** 22...♖xh6 23.♘g5+ ♔g8 24.♘f7 is decisive. **23.♘g5+ ♔g8 24.♘f7 ♕e8 25.♕g5+ ♔h7 26.♕h4 ♘xe6 27.♖xe6 ♖xf7 28.♖fe1 ♖b7 29.♗f8+ ♔g8 30.♖g6+ ♗g7 31.♗xg7 ♖xg7 32.♖h6 1-0**

□ **Alex Yermolinsky**
■ **Alex Shabalov**
Boston 1999 (5)

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 g6 5.♘h3 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3 ♘a6?!
In this game the imaginative Alex Shabalov tries to avoid weakening the e6 square by not playing d7-d6 at all. However, 7...d6 8.♘f4 ♘a6, as in Kempinski-Markowski, Polanica Zdroj 1999, is probably better.
8.e4 ♘xe4 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♗xe4 ♘c7 11.♘f4 ♘e8?
Continuing with his plan – 11...d6 was still a possibility.
12.♗g2 ♘d6 13.♖e1 b6 14.h4 ♗a6 15.♕g4 ♘f5 16.h5

White's attack is simply too strong here.
16...g5 17.♕xg5 Yermo misses an opportunity to play 17.d6! with a bigger advantage. Now Black is able to wiggle out. **17...e5! 18.♘h3 ♕xg5 19.♗xg5 h6 20.♗e3 ♘d4 21.♗xd4 cxd4 22.♗e4 ♖ac8 23.a4 ♖c5 24.b4 ♖c3 25.a5 b5 26.♔g2 d6** In this complicated endgame each side has its own chances. **27.f3 ♗c8 28.g4 ♗f6 29.♖e2 ♗h4 30.♖b1 ♖f7 31.♖b2 a6 32.♖b1 ♖g7 33.♖h1 ♖e3 34.♖xe3 dxe3 35.♔f1 ♖c7 36.♔e2 ♖c4 37.♖b1?!** 37.g5! ♔g7 (37...♗xh3? 38.gxh6!) 38.gxh6+ would have maintained the balance. **37...♖xe4 38.fxe4 ♗xg4+ 39.♔xe3 ♗xh3 40.♔f3 ♗g5 41.♖b3 ♗d7 42.♖c3 ♗d8 43.♔g3 ♔f7 44.♖f3+ ♔e8 45.♖c3 ♔e7 ½-½**
A draw, although Black could play for a win in the final position.

CHAPTER 6

Jeroen Bosch

The Katalymov Variation

The SOS-way to play the 'quiet' Rubinstein

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♕d5!?

This surprising queen move is the SOS-way to play the 'quiet' Rubinstein Variation. This line is sometimes called the Becker Variation, but it seems only fair to name it after the main protagonist Boris Katalymov who played 4...♕d5 against none other than Paul Keres in 1965. Black's centralizing queen move may remind you of the Scandinavian, but it is in fact much closer to several French lines where Black plays an early ...♕d5 (the most respectable example is 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5 ♕xd5). There are, however, also similarities to the Caro-Kann line with ...gxf6 (in the line 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.♘xf6+ gxf6, as in the aforementioned game Keres-Katalymov). Sometimes there are even resemblances to the Nimzo-Indian.

It is important to note the transpositions to other French lines. Thus, some lines that will be examined below may also occur via the Exchange Variation: 3.exd5 ♕xd5 and now 4.♘c3 ♗b4, but White has other possibilities on the 4th move where we will not go into. In addition, we can also arrive at the same position via the Winawer line 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.exd5 ♕xd5. Note that in Katalymov's version both sides 'lose a move'. In the games examined below I will make no distinction between the pure Katalymov move order and the Exchange or Winawer move order.

After 4...♕d5, White is at crossroads:
I Defending the knight : 5.♗d3
II Attacking the queen: 5.♘c3

I Defending the knight

5.♗d3

For the moment White preserves the knight on its central square.
Other moves pose no real challenge to 4...♕d5:
– 5.f3?! protects the knight, but is too ugly to contemplate.
– 5.♘g3 c5 6.♘f3 ♘f6 (a safe line is 6...cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♕xd4 8.♘xd4 a6 with an equal game, Abdulla-Schammo, Dubai Olympiad 1986) 7.♗b5+ ♘c6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♗d7 10.♗e3 ♘xd4 11.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 12.♗xd4 ♗e7 13.c3 0-0 and Black had no problems in Perenyi-L.Kiss, Nagykanizsa 1988.
– 5.♕d3 (poetic justice, her majesty personally protects the nimble knight against her rival's attack) 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 (weaker is 6.c3 e5! 7.dxe5 ♕xd3 8.♗xd3 ♘xe5 with equality. Mallee-Wockenfuss, Menden, Germany 1974) 6...♘f6 7.♘xf6+ gxf6 8.♗f4 ♗d7 9.a3 (bad is 9.♗xc7? ♘b4 10.♕d2 ♖c8) 9...0-0-0 10.♗e2 ♘e7!? 11.0-0 ♗c6 12.b4 ♕e4! and Black was already slightly better in Rej-Crouch, Copenhagen 1995.
After 5.♗d3 Black should immediately challenge the knight again with

5...♘f6

6.♘xf6+

In return for a double f-pawn White parts with his centralized knight. In practice several entirely different set-ups have been tried:
● 6.f3 (the only way to keep the knight on e4 and keep the d4-pawn defended. Still, this weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal should not dissuade Black from 4...♕d5) 6...♘a6!? 7.♘e2 ♘b4 8.♘xf6+ gxf6 9.♗e4 ♕a5 10.c3 f5! 11.♗b1 ♘d5 12.0-0 c6 13.♘f4± Vorotnikov-Dvoretsky, Beltsy 1972.
● 6.♘g3 ♗d7 7.♘f3 ♗b5 (this is a useful manoeuvre to keep in mind) 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♗xb5 ♕xb5 10.b3 0-0-0 (safer is 10...♗e7!?) 11.c4 ♕b6 (Muratov also tried 11...♕a6 12.♗e3 ♗c5 13.b4 ♗xb4 14.♕c2 ♘g4 15.♖ab1 in Berkovich-Muratov, USSR 1976) 12.♗e3 ♗e7 13.♕e2 ♘g4 14.♖fb1 ♗f6 15.b4 and White was better in Losev-Muratov, Moscow 1976.
● 6.♕e2 White feels that his development edge and the open d-file will give him ample compensation for the pawn. In practice this is certainly dangerous. Please note though that Black's position holds no weaknesses. 6...♘xe4 7.♗xe4 ♕xd4 8.♘f3 ♕d8 9.♗d2 ♘d7 10.0-0-0 ♗d6 11.♗c3 0-0 12.h4, White had some compensation, but for equality and not for an advantage, Shamkovich-Dvoretsky, Moscow 1973.
● 6.♕f3!? ♕xd4 (exchanging a pair of knights with 6...♘xe4 before taking the pawn is a sensible solution. After 7.♕xe4 Black equalizes with 7...♕xe4+ (7...♗d7) 8.♗xe4 c5. While Dimitrov-Donchev, Elenite 1994, went: 7.♗xe4 ♕xd4 8.♘e2 ♕b6 9.♗f4 ♘d7 10.0-0-0 ♘f6 11.♘c3 ♗e7 12.♗e5 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 0-0 14.♕c3 f6 15.♗xc7 ♕b4 16.♕xb4 ½-½) 7.♘e2 ♕d8 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♗xf6 (here 9.0-0-0 enables Black to exchange some minor pieces: 9...♘xe4 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♗xc4 c6 12.♕h5 ♘d7 13.♘g3 h6 14.h4 0-0 and

White did not have enough compensation in Tzermiadianos-Pandavos, Ano Liosia 1993) 9...♗xf6 10.0-0-0 ♘d7 11.♘f4 ♗c5 12.h4 ♕e7 13.g3 a5!? Black does not castle so as not to give White a clear target. Instead he seeks active play against White's king, Kotkov-Katalymov, Krasnodar 1966.

6...gxf6 7.♘f3

Again White can sac the d-pawn: 7.♕f3!? ♕xd4 (7...♕xf3 8.♘xf3 is only slightly better for White) 8.♘e2 ♕d8 9.♗f4 and White has certain compensation for the pawn.

7...♖g8

This is of course one of the main points of Katalymov's set-up. After 6...gf6 the rook shines along the g-file, and combined with the queen on d5 (or h5 if her majesty is chased from the central spot) and a bishop on d6 White will feel the pressure on his kingside. What is more, White seems to have no choice but to castle into it.

Most natural now is 8.0-0 which is what Keres played and indeed the most popular choice. Still in this double-edged position it is important to be well-prepared for the alternatives.

A) 8.c4
B) 8.♕e2
C) 8.♗f4
D) 8.0-0

Variation A

8.c4

Against the correct response this is nearly always slightly inaccurate. Black's queen aims for the h5-square anyway.

8...♕h5!

After 8...♗b4+?! 9.♗d2 (even stronger than this automatic move is 9.♔f1 ♕h5 10.♕a4+ ♘c6 11.♗c4 ♖b8 12.h3 which leaves Black virtually defenceless) 9...♗xd2+ 10.♕xd2 ♕h5 11.♖g1 ♘c6 12.0-0-0 e5 13.dxe5 (13.♗e4!) 13...fxe5 14.♘xe5!? ♘xe5 15.♗xh7 ♗f5! 16.♗xg8 (16.♗xf5! ♕xf5 17.♖ge1±) 16...♘d3+ 17.♔b1 ♘b4+ 18.♔a1 ♘c2+ 19.♔b1 ♘b4+ 20.♔a1 a draw was the result in Palmer-Camilleri, Skopje ol 1972.

9.♗f4

9...♖xg2?

Katalymov plunges into it (note that this game was played some 36 years after his game against Keres). Is it correct? No, it is not, I am afraid. Much safer is 9...♗d6 . The rest of the game is pure entertainment or even slapstick. **10.♗g3 ♗d6 11.♘h4** Catching the intrepid rook. **11...♕a5+ 12.♔f1 ♖xg3 13.hxg3 ♘c6 14.♘f3 b5** Again played without fear, but Black's compensation is clearly insufficient. Still, he managed to confuse White into losing this position somehow in Filchenkov-Katalymov, Tomsk 2002.

Variation B

8.♕e2

White prepares castling to the queenside, and takes control over the e4-square. This line is not too frightening though.

8...♕h5 A good move, but courageous players might like to investigate 8...♖xg2.

9.♗f4 ♗d6

This is always the correct response when White puts his bishop on f4.

10.♗xd6

Here 10.♗g3 ♗xg3 (10...♘c6; 10...f5 11.0-0-0 f4?! 12.♗h4±) 11.fxg3 ♖xg3?! 12.0-0-0 left White ahead in development in Levitina-Teodorescu, Medellin ol 1974, after 12...♖g7!? (12...♖g8) 13.d5 e5 14.h3 ♘d7 15.g4 ♕h6+. Instead of the game continuation 16.♔b1 White could have won with 16.g5! fxg5 17.♘xe5 ♔f8 18.♘g4 ♕d6 19.♖de1 ♔g8 20.♖hf1. Black can hardly move at all.

10...cxd6 11.0-0-0 ♘a6!?

12.♔b1

In Malesic-Maric, Yugoslavia 1966, 12.d5 e5 led to an unclear game. Naturally, 12.♗xa6 bxa6 merely opens files (and an important diagonal!) on the wrong side of the board. After 12.♔b1 Black is fine.

12...♘c7 13.c4 ♖xg2 Finally the time has come to take the pawn. **14.♖hg1 ♖xg1 15.♖xg1 ♔f8 16.♕e3 ♗d7 17.♕f4 ♘e8** Black's king is perfectly safe, and he is simply better. Messa-Trabattoni, Venice 1979.

Variation C

8.♗f4

Indirectly protecting the g-pawn, since 8...♖xg2? 9.♗g3 catches the rook.

8...♗d6 9.♗g3

The only critical reply. Nothing is gained by 9.c4?! ♕h5!.

In the game Bereslavsky-Chebotarev, Nizhni Novgorod 1999, White played 9.♗xd6 cxd6 10.♖g1 (10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖e1 ♕h5) 10...♘c6 11.c3 h5?! 12.♕d2 e5 13.dxe5 (13.c4? ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♖xg1+ 15.♗f1 ♗h3−+) 13...fxe5 14.♗e2 and now rather than the game continuation 14...♕e4? Black should play 14...♕xd2+ 15.♘xd2 ♗g4 when he is all right in the ending.

9...♘c6

Forcing but double-edged is 9...f5 10.♕d2, and now:

– 10...♘c6 11.a3 (11.c4 ♕xf3! 12.gxf3 ♗b4) 11...♗d7 12.c4 ♕a5 13.♕xa5 ♘xa5 14.b4 ♘c6 15.c5 ♗e7 16.b5 (16.♗xc7 ♗f6) 16...♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♗f6 18.♘c2 ♗xa1 19.♘xa1 0-0-0 20.♔e2 e5 when in Ahmed Garcia-Garrido Moreno, Gijon 1999, White agreed a draw, but could have played on with 21.c6.

– 10...f4 11.♗xf4 (much more dangerous is

11.c4 ♕h5 12.♗xf4 ♖xg2 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.0-0-0 ♗xf4 15.♕xf4 ♗d7 16.d5± Agrachev-Chernin, USSR 1976) 11...♖xg2 12.♔e2 ♘c6 13.♖hg1 c5!? 14.♖xg2 (14.dxc5 ♗b4 15.c3 ♗g4!) 14...♘xd4+ 15.♘xd4 ♕xg2 16.♕e3 ♕g4+ 17.♔d2 ♕xf4 18.♕xf4 exf4= Kolas-Harestad, Norway 1997.

10.c3 Or 10.♕d2. **10...f5 11.♕e2** 11.♕d2 is now too slow: 11...f4 12.♗xf4 ♖xg2. **11...♗d7** But not 11...f4? 12.♗h4 ♖xg2 13.♗e4 ♕h5 (13...♕a5 14.♘d2 ♖g8 15.♘c4+–) 14.♘e5 ♕xe2+ 15.♔xe2±. **12.♗c4** 12.0-0-0 ♕xa2. **12...♕e4**

With equality. **13.d5?! ♘a5 14.♕xe4 fxe4 15.♘d2 ♘xc4 16.♘xc4 ♗xg3 17.hxg3 exd5 18.♘e3 ♗e6 19.♖xh7 0-0-0** and Black's game was preferable in Aridov-Tchoubar, Kiev 2003.

Variation D

8.0-0 ♘c6

Preventing 9.♗f4 with 8...♗d6 is an interesting thought:

– 9.c4 ♕h5 10.c5 ♗e7 11.♗f4 ♕g4 12.♗g3 f5 13.♘e5 ♕xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♘d7 15.♘xd7 ♔xd7 16.d5 ♗xc5 (16...exd5 17.♗xf5+ ♔c6 18.♗xh7) 17.♗b5+ ♔e7 18.♗xc7 ♗d7 19.♗xd7 ♔xd7 20.♖ac1 ♔xc7 21.♖xc5+ ♔b6 and the rook ending is equal. Buljovcic-Maric, Sombor 1966.

– 9.♖e1 ♕h5 (9...♘c6 transposes to the main line) 10.c4 ♗d7 11.♗f1 ♘c6 12.c5 ♗e7 13.♗d2 e5? (going for tactics with his king still in the middle. It was correct to castle queenside) 14.d5 ♗g4 and now rather than 15.♗e2 White could have won on the spot with 15.dxc6!. Probably both players missed that after 15...♗xf3 the intermediate move 16.cxb7! works for White: 16...♖d8 17.♗b5+, Leschenko-Tchoubar, Kiev 2005.

9.♖e1

In Vandenbussche-Meier, Budva 2003, there followed 9.c4 which chases the queen to the excellent h5-square. Black won after 9...♕h5 10.♗f4 ♗d6 11.♗xd6 (11.♗g3 ♗d7) 11...cxd6 12.♖e1 e5 13.dxc5?! (13.♘xe5!? ♕xd1 14.♘xc6+ ♕xe1+ 15.♖xe1+ and White has compensation for the exchange, but Black has plenty of chances too after 15...♗e6 16.♘a5 ♔d7) 13...dxe5 14.♔h1 (14.♘xe5 ♕xd1 15.♘xc6+ ♕xe1+ 16.♖xe1+ ♗c6 is better for Black.) 14...♗d7 15.b4? 0-0-0 16.♕b1? ♖xg2! 17.♔xg2 ♗h3+ 18.♔g3 ♕g4+ mate.

9...♗d6

10.g3

Hoang Thanh Trang has played his own personal theme tournament in Budapest with 10.♗e4 ♕h5 11.c4 ♗d7 and now:

● 12.c5 ♗e7 13.♗f4 f5 14.♗c2 ♕g4 15.♗g3 0-0-0 16.♕d2 Palkovi-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1996. Trang could have played 16...♗e8!? attacking d4 when 17.h3 ♘xd4 18.♕a5 (18.♘xd4 ♕xd4

19.♕xd4 ♖xd4 20.♗xf5 ♗xc5∓) 18...♘xf3+ 19.♔h1! (19.gxf3 ♕f4−+) 19...♕xg3 (19...♕xh3+!? 20.gxh3 ♖xg3 21.♖ed1!; 21.fxg3 ♖d2 22.♕xd2 ♘xd2∞) 20.fxg3 ♘xe1 21.♕xa7 ♘xc2 22.♕a8+ ♔d7 23.♕a4+ is a spectacular draw.

● 12.d5 ♘c7 13.dxe6 fxe6

– 14.♗xb7 (this demonstrates the dangers that White is facing) 14...♖b8 15.♗e4 f5 16.♗c2 ♗c6 17.♗a4 and now instead of 17...♗xh2+, Yakovenko-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1996, Black should have gone for 17...♖xg2+! 18.♔f1 (18.♔xg2 ♕xh2+ 19.♔f1 ♕h3+−+) 18...♖g6 and Black is much better.

– 14.g3 0-0-0 15.♕b3 c6 (worse was 15...b6 16.♘d4 ♗c5 17.♗e3 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 c5 19.♕a3! ♗f5? 20.♗xe5! ♗xe4 21.♖xe4 fxe5 22.♕xe7± Tolnai-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1996) 16.♘d4 e5 17.♘c2 f5 (Black has good chances here) 18.♗f3 ♕g6 19.♗e3 f4!? 20.♗xa7 ♗f5 21.♖ac1 e4 22.♗g2 e3 23.♘xe3! (23.fxe3 fxg3 is asking for it) 23...fxe3 24.♗xe3 and the game was eventually drawn, Varga-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1998.

10...♕h5

Typical for the whole line. White was threatening to take h7.

11.♗e4

Keres aims to play 12.d5, but Katalymov's next forces him to part with the bishop. More chances are perhaps offered by 11.♗e2. This threatens 12.♘g5, so Black has little choice but to continue 11...♕h3 and now if White is peacefully inclined he can take a draw by repetition with 12.♗f1 ♕h5 13.♗e2 ♕h3 14.♗f1 ♕h5 ½-½ Matanovic-Maric, Titograd 1965. However, he can also decide to play with 12.d5 ♘c7 (12...♘e5) 13.dxe6 ♗xc6 (13...fxe6±) 14.♗b5+± ♗d7 15.♗xd7+ (15.♕d5 0-0-0 16.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 17.♕xf7 ♗xg3! forces a draw) 15...♕xd7 16.♕d4 ♕g4 (16...♕f5 17.♘h4 ♕xc2 18.♗f4!±) 17.♕xg4 ♖xg4 18.c3 with a slight but definite edge for White in the ending, Glek-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1998.

11...f5 12.♗xc6+ bxc6 13.c4 c5 14.dxc5 ♗xc5 15.♗e3

Play is equal after the greedy 15.♕d5 ♖b8 and now:

– 16.♕xc5 ♕xf3 17.♕d5 (17.♕xc7 ♗b7 18.♕xb8+ ♔d7 19.♕xb7+ ♕xb7) 17...♗b7 18.♕xf3 ♗xf3.

– 16.♕c6+ ♗d7 17.♕xc5 (not 17.♕xc7? when 17...♕xf3 18.♕xb8+ ♔e7 19.♕f4 ♗xf2+ 20.♔f1 ♕h1+ 21.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 22.♔f1 ♖xg3 is quite a spectacular finish) 17...♕xf3 18.♕d5 ♗c6.

15...♗b4 16.♘d4 ♕xd1 17.♖exd1 ♗d7

And White has only a very slight edge. Keres won in the end (because he was Keres). The fact that no one has repeated this line in prac-

tice is, however, another indication that Black's problems after 4...♕d5 (if any) lie elsewhere. Keres-Katalymov, Moscow 1965.

II Attacking the queen

5.♘c3 ♗b4

Black keeps the queen on her centralized spot, and is ready to exchange the bishop for the knight if necessary. By pinning the knight Black's dark-squared bishop can influence the fight for the light squares e4 and d5.

6.♘f3

Most natural but there are some other moves to consider:

● 6.♕g4!?. A well-known ploy in the French (Winawer), Black's best is probably: 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 ♘ge7 planning to answer 8.♕xg7 by 8...♖g8 9.♕xh7 e5 with ...♗f5 and castling queenside to follow.

● 6.a3. This old recommendation of Pomar immediately nets White the bishop pair but Black's superior pawn structure more than makes it up. Play sometimes resembles the Nimzo-Indian. 6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♘f6 (here 7...c5 is quite playable too: 8.♕f3?! ♘f6 9.♕xd5 exd5 10.dxc5 0-0 11.♗f4 ♖e8+ 12.♗e2 ♘e4 13.♔f1 ♘xc3∓ Vasconcellos-Van Riemsdijk, Sao Bernardo 1968) 8.♘f3 c5 (Black can postpone this and complete his development in much the same way as in the Karpov Variation of the Nimzo-Indian: ♘bd7, b6, ♗b7) 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗b2 Planning 12.c4 and provoking Black into playing 11...c4 12.♘d2 ♘a5 13.a4 ♗d7 14.♗f3 ♕g5 15.♖e1 ♘d5 16.♘e4 (16.♖e5 ♕g6 17.♗e4 f5) 16...♕f4 17.♗c1 ♕c7 18.♕d2 ♗c6 19.♕g5 b6 20.♕h4 ♖fc8 21.♗d2 ♖ad8 and Black was doing fine in Lhagvasuren-Rogers, Novi Sad ol 1990.

● 6.♘e2 (a suggestion of Ciocaltea's. White intends 7.a3 without the risk of fracturing his structure) 6...♘c6 (note that 6...c5 is well-met by 7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.♘xc3 ♕xd4 9.♕xd4 cxd4 10.♘b5. White is slightly better after 6...♘f6 7.a3) 7.♗f4 (after 7.♗e3 ♕d7 8.a3 ♗e7 – 8...♗xc3+ 9.♘xc3 ♘f6 – 9.g3 ♘f6 10.♗g2 b6 11.d5! exd5 12.♘xd5 ♗b7 13.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 14.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 15.0-0-0+ ♔c8 16.♘f4 was very unpleasant for our eponymous hero, Shinkevich-Katalymov, Tomsk 2001. Therefore, it is better to answer 7.♗e3 with 7...♘f6 8.a3 ♗xc3+ 9.♘xc3 ♕d7 – 9...♕d8 10.♗e2 ♘d5 11.♕d2 0-0 12.0-0-0± Kecic-Karnar, Skofja Loka 1997 – 10.♗c2 b6 11.♗f3 ♗b7 12.d5 ♘a5 13.dxe6 ♕xe6 14.♗xb7 ♘xb7 15.♕f3 0-0-0 16.0-0 ♕g4 17.♕xg4+ ♘xg4 18.♗f4 and White's advantage is so small one needs a magnifying glass to see it. Navarro-Baron, Pamplona 2002/03) 7...♕d8 (losing time perhaps, but the bishop is not well placed on f4 in view of a subsequent ...♘f6-d5) 8.♕d3 ♘f6 9.0-0-0 0-0 10.h4?! (better was 10.♗g5) 10...e5!

11.dxe5 ♕xd3 12.cxd3 ♘g4 13.♗g3 ♘gxe5

14.d4 ♘g4 15.f3?! (15.d5) 15...♘e3 16.♖d3 ♘xf1 17.♖xf1 ♖e8 18.♗f4 (18.♗xc7 b6 19.♖d2 ♗a6−+) 18...b6! 19.♖e3 ♗a6 20.♖d1 ♖xe3 21.♗xe3 ♖c8 winning, Arnason-Rogers, Groningen 1990.

6...♘f6

This is the main line, but Black sometimes tries to exchange his 'bad' French bishop at this stage. There are two ways to implement this plan.

– **6...♗d7** I quite like this simple move – intending 7...♗b5. But unfortunately it is not so easy to improve upon Razuvaev-Kuzmin (Soviet Championship, Baku 1972): 7.♗d3 ♗b5 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♘d7 10.♖b1 a6 and now instead of the game continuation 11.c4!? ♗xc4 12.♗xc4 ♕xc4 13.♖xb7 ♘gf6 14.♗a3 ♘d5 with equality, Razuvaev indicated 11.♕e2 as better for White.

– **6...b6!?** 7.♗d3 ♘f6 8.♗d2 (White prevents the fracturing of his structure. Still, the simple 8.0-0 is perhaps stronger: 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♗a6 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♕d3 ♘b8 13.c4 ♕b7 14.♗a3 ♖e8 15.d5 ♘bd7 16.dxe6 ♖xe6 17.♖xe6 fxe6 18.♖e1± Lengyel-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1997) 8...♗xc3 9.♗xc3 ♗a6 (mission accomplished) 10.0-0 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♘c6 12.b3 0-0 13.♗b2 ♖fd8 14.c4 ♕h5 15.♕e3 ♖d6 16.h3 ♖ad8 17.♖fe1 h6 with equality, Malbran-M.Gurevich, Philadelphia 1989.

7.♗d3

Black had no problems in Kostic-Rajkovic, Nis 1996, after 7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 b6 9.c4 ♕d6 10.a4 ♘bd7 11.a5 ♗b7 12.♗e2 0-0 ½-½.

Also 7.♗d2 is hardly critical. Black is forced to give up his bishop, but gains valuable time in return. 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 (8.bxc3 c5) 8...b6 (8...♘c6 9.♗d3 ♘e4 10.♗xe4 ♕xe4+ 11.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 12.♔xe2 has occurred quite a few times in practice. It is an easy – but boring – way to equalize) 9.♗d3 ♗a6 (again trading the bishops is a convenient way to equalize) 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 ♘bd7 13.♗b4 (13.♕e2 ♖fd8 14.b3 ♕h5 15.♗b2 ♕g6 16.c4 c5 17.♖ad1 cxd4 18.♗xd4± Skorna-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 1996) and now rather than 13...c5 (as in Beckemeier-Schebler, Dortmund 1998) Black can simply play 13...♖fe8 14.c4 ♕b7 with an equal game.

7...b6

Black employs a healthy Nimzo-Indian approach. The old line starts with the attempt to grab a pawn with 7...♘e4. Many strong theoreticians have devoted quite some time to this line. It really isn't worth the trouble though. I will only give the most important games here for the sake of completeness: 7...♘e4 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗xc3 10.♖b1 (for only one pawn White has developed almost all his pieces. Black's queen and bishop are horribly vulnerable) 10...♘c6 (of course 10...♕xa2? 11.♖b3 is suicidal. The classical bishop sacrifice is the reason that Black has to postpone castling for quite some time: 10...0-0 11.♖b3 ♗a5 12.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♘g5+. An old game Makarov-Dubinsky, USSR 1966, saw: 10...c5 11.♖b3 cxd4 12.♘g5±. Finally, 10...c6 is not very uplifting either after: 11.♖b3 ♗xd4 12.c4 – 12.♘xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗b2 is good too – 12...♕d8 13.♘xd4 ♕xd4 14.♕h5 ♘d7 15.♗b2 ♕c5 16.♕h4 ♕e7 17.♕g3 f6 18.♗a3 c5 19.♗xh7 ♘e5 20.♗c4± Jetzl-Czebe, Budapest 1997)

11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♖b5! ♕d6 13.♖xb7 ♘xd4 (no better is 13...♘b4 14.♘e5 0-0 15.♗e4 ♗a4 Wall-Crouch, Newcastle 1995, as 16.a3! is very strong) 14.♘xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♕xd4 16.♖xc7 ♕b6 and now either 17.♖c4 as in Romanishin-Dvoretsky, Odessa 1972, or 17.♕f3!? Sax-Strobel, Vraca 1975, lead to a huge advantage for White.

Romanishin's play against Dvoretsky is exemplary, and one glance at the position after his eleventh move (11.♗e3) should convince you that White has ample compensation. Therefore, rather than grabbing a pawn, I would advocate 7...b6. Black just continues with his central (light-squared) strategy.

8.0-0

Play was equal after 8.♕e2 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♖d1 ♘bd7 12.♗f4 ♖ac8 13.c4 ♕h5 14.♘d2 ♕xe2 15.♗xe2 ♖fe8, Kiroski-Dimitrov, Star Dojran 1996.

8...♗xc3

Black parts with his bishop as he intended all along. He gains time and a structural advantage in return.

9.bxc3 0-0

It is entirely possible to postpone castling here:

– 9...c5 10.♕e2 0-0 11.a4 ♘bd7 12.♖e1 ♗b7 13.♗a6 ♗xa6 14.♕xa6 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖fc8∓ Foguelman-Suarez, Mar del Plata 1967.

– 9...♗a6 10.♖e1 ♗xd3 11.cxd3 0-0 12.a4 ♘bd7 13.♖b1 c5 14.♗a3 ♖fd8 15.dxc5 ♘xc5 16.♗xc5 ♕xc5∓ Julian-Prié, Cannes 1990.

– 9...♗b7 10.♗f4 c5 11.c4 ♕d7 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♖b1 ♕c6 14.♖b5 ♘bd7 15.♕b1 ♗a6 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.♗xe5 (17.♖b8+ ♔e7 18.♖xh8 ♘f3+ 19.gxf3 ♖xh8∓) 17...♗xb5 18.cxb5 ♕d5∓ Brendel-Budnikov, Vienna 1991.

10.♖e1 ♘bd7 11.♗g5 ♗b7 12.♕e2 h6 13.♗f4 c5 14.♗e5 ♖ac8 15.c4 ♕c6 16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.c3 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♕d6 19.♖ad1

Now guess from what opening this position derived? Surely this looks more like the Karpov Variation in the Nimzo-Indian than a French Defence! Black is slightly better by the way. Rogers now plays a fine positional move, trading another pair of minor pieces.

19...♗xf3! 20.♕xf3 ♖fd8 21.♗f1 ♖c7

Black has no weaknesses, while White is stuck with his hanging pawn centre. With only one pair of minor pieces White lacks the fire power that he needs to compensate for his structural weakness. Still, Black has only a very slight edge of course. He managed to win in the end, Ziatdinov-Rogers, Biel 1992.

CHAPTER 7

Glenn Flear

The Other Long Diagonal

Owen's 1...b6

After 1.e4 there are various systems that lead to Black fianchettoing his king's bishop, but it's much rarer to see him playing for action down the other long diagonal after ...♗b7. Where it does occur (in say, some lines of the French or Spanish) it's generally only once the central arena has been clarified.

So meeting 1.e4 with 1...b6 is a truly radical approach. Black neglects kingside development and, in terms of the centre, gives White carte blanche to do whatever he likes!

However Black has great flexibility and can react in various ways depending on White's choice. So White will almost certainly be out of his book, on his own and faced with unfamiliar strategies right from the beginning of the game. Not many of your opponents will relish that!

So all-in-all Owen's 1...b6 is the ultimate SOS weapon.

Throughout this survey I've been selective, highlighting various interesting options. In practical terms it's impossible to be exhaustive without upsetting the editor but because of various move order possibilities I've still included a few lines that can arise from both the English Opening and English Defence (1.c4 b6)!

So hopefully there should be enough material for readers to be confident enough to give 1...b6 a go.

In all cases covered here Black develops his king's bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal, so I've not covered the 'Hippo' (i.e. a double fianchetto with Black) which in itself could make a good subject for a future SOS survey!

There's clearly no refutation, but White undoubtedly has several ways to obtain an objective 'slight edge'. Nevertheless those who are tempted by 1...b6 are not seeking 'dry equality' but rather 'juicy complexity' and there's a good chance that they'll achieve that! There are some superb resources for Black and it's an ideal opening for those seeking to turn the tables and go for the full point.

Variation Structure

A rough guide to the covered variations:

A) 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e6 4.a3

B) 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4

C) 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♕e2 ♘c6 5.c3 e5

D) 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 c6 4.♘f3 c5 5.c3 ♘f6

E) 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 e6 4.c4 ♗b4+

F) 1.e4 b6 2.c4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e5

Variation A – ♘c3 & a3

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e6 4.a3

White spends a tempo to avoid ...♗b4. Black now needs to decide how he will counter White's centre.

4...♘f6 5.♗d3 c5

Going French with 5...d5 is also fairly popular: 6.e5 ♘fd7 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.♘e2 c5 9.c3 ♗a6 (in comparison with some other lines of the Owen, possible is 9...c4 10.♗c2 b5 see Variation D) 10.♘f4 ♕c8 11.0-0 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 ♕a6 (an interesting strategy) 13.♕d1 ♘c6 14.♗e3 Ehlvest-Blatny, New York 2004, and now Black should simply castle short with a satisfactory game.

6.♘f3 cxd4

Here 6...c4?! seems to be inferior: 7.♗xc4 ♘xe4 8.♘xe4 ♗xe4 9.♕e2 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 d5 11.♗b5+ ♘d7 12.c4 and White was on top in the game R.Rodriguez-Aaron, Bangalore 1981.

7.♘xd4 d6

Instead 7...♘c6!? is better known but the text is an interesting interpretation. Black just heads for a sound-looking Hedgehog set-up.

8.b3

In Sariego-Martin del Campo, Merida 1998, there followed: 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.f4 ♘bd7 10.♕f3 a6 11.b4 ♕c7 12.♗b2 h5!? 13.♖ae1 and in this tense position a draw was agreed.

8...♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♗e7 10.♕e2 a6 11.f4 ♕c7 12.0-0-0 ♘c5 13.♔b1 0-0-0

Ivanisevic-Bauer, Bastia rapid 2004, with a complex struggle.

Variation B – ♘c3 vs ♗b4

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6

Directly attacking the e4-pawn, and thereby limiting White's options. A possible drawback is that a future e4-e5 will gain a tempo on the knight. We will also look at move orders starting with 3...e6.

4.♘c3 e6

In Variation A we covered lines involving a2-a3. It's rare to allow ...♗b4 but what happens if...

5.♘f3

Against 5.♘ge2 there is little point in putting the bishop on b4 as this doesn't threaten to damage the white pawn structure, so it's better to attend directly to the centre. 5...c5 (5...d5?! is less appropriate here as after 6.e5 ♘fd7 White has 7.♘f4! with strong threats. After the further 7...g6 8.♕g4 ♕e7 9.♘b5 ♘a6 10.b3, Oral-Gawehns, Hamburg 1999, White was clearly better) 6.0-0 ♕c8 (of course Black can try 6...cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘c6, with a Sicilian Defence pawn structure as in other lines, but Blatny's clever text move is specific to this position as he exploits the knight's position on e2 by threatening 7...c4 winning a piece!) 7.dxc5 bxc5

– 8.♘g3. It doesn't take much to provoke Blatny to steer the game into unfamiliar waters and after 8...h5!? 9.h4 ♘c6 10.♖e1 ♗d6 11.♘f1 ♗b8!? 12.b3 ♘e7 13.♗g5 ♘g6 he had achieved a unique position in Yudasin-Blatny, New York rapid 2004, and went on to win.

– 8.b3 ♘c6 9.♗b2 ♘b4 10.♘f4 ♗d6 11.♘h5 ♘xh5 12.♕xh5 ♘xd3 13.cxd3 ♕c6 14.♖ac1 0-0 was strategically unbalanced in Jansa-Blatny, Austria tt-2 2003/04.

5...♗b4

6.♗g5

– 6.♕e2 d5 7.exd5 (or 7.e5 ♘e4 8.♗d2 ♘xd2 9.♕xd2 ♗e7 10.h4 ♗a6 E.Berg-Blatny, Bermuda 2003, with a sound-looking French Defence for Black) 7...♕xd5!? (7...♘xd5 8.♗d2 is more common) 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 0-0 10.♗f4 ♖c8 11.♖fe1 c5 and Black was better in Bareev-Bauer, Enghien-les-Bains 2001.

– 6.e5 ♘e4 7.0-0 is a somewhat ambitious gambit: Black can probably get away with the booty and live to tell the day e.g. 7...♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♗xc3 9.♖b1 ♗d5 10.♘g5 ♕e7 11.♗e3 ♗xd4!?, Aveskulov-Blatny, Blitz 2004, and Black was better.

In Socko-Haba, Pardubice 1993, White did not sac a pawn but went: 7.♗xe4 ♗xe4 8.0-0, when an interesting struggle arose after 8...♗g6 9.♗g5 ♕c8 10.♘e2 h6 11.♗h4 d5 12.♘f4 ♗f5 13.♘h5 ♗f8. Here, unlike with many analogous positions with the same pawn structure, Black has achieved a fine posting for his bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal.

6...h6 7.♗xf6 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♕xf6

White has a lead in development and thus a temporary initiative, but potential problems could lie in store due to his weakened pawn structure.

9.0-0 d6

After 9...d5 White should open the position e.g. 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♘e5 0-0 12.♕h5 ♕d8 13.c4 ♗b7 14.d5! ♕d6 15.♖ae1 exd5 16.♕f5 g6 17.♕h3 ♔g7 18.♘xf7! with a strong attack, Kramnik-Ehlvest, Moscow ol 1994.

10.♘d2

White is aiming for expansion with f2-f4. How should Black react? Now if 10...g5!?, then 11.♕e2 (White can afford to take his time as Black's king will be insecure wherever he tries to hide. 11.e5?! is too loosening: 11...dxe5 12.♘e4 ♕e7 13.dxe5 ♘d7 14.♖e1 0-0-0 Akhayan-Jadoul, Belgium tt 2003/04 and Black was better) 11...e5 12.♕e3 ♘d7 13.♗b5 0-0-0 14.a4 a5 15.♖ab1 ♖he8 16.♖fe1 ♕g6 17.♕d3 ♔b8, Nikolaidis-Minasian, Panormo Zonal 1998. White has a useful queenside initiative.

The most popular is:

10...e5

but White will react with f2-f4 anyway, when Black will have to defend accurately:

11.f4!

Otherwise Black will complete development with a sound game.

11...exf4!?

The idea is that winning back the pawn will force White to open the g-file, thereupon it's less easy for him to maintain control.

– The sharp line 11...exd4 12.e5 is probably too dangerous: 12...dxe5 13.fxe5 ♕g5 14.♘f3 ♗xf3!? (14...♕e3+ 15.♔h1 0-0 16.cxd4 c5 17.♖e1 ♗xf3?! 18.gxf3 ♕xd4 19.♗e4, Dautov-Kengis, Daugavpils 1989, winning the exchange) 15.♖xf3! ♕xe5 16.♕e1 f6 17.cxd4 ♕xe1+ 18.♖xe1+, Sepp-Vetemaa, Bruges 1995, with more than enough compensation.

– Although 11...♕e7 has scored well in practise I'm not convinced of its soundness: 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.♗b5+! (13.♗c4 0-0 14.♕h5 ♘d7 15.♖ae1 ♖ae8 16.♖e3 ♘f6 Glek-Polak, Saint Vincent 2002, and Black successfully repulsed the attack) 13...c6 (13...♗c6? 14.♖f5) 14.♗c4 0-0 15.♖f5 ♘d7 16.♕h5 b5 17.♗b3 c5, Maliutin-Kramnik, Sochi 1990. I bet the majority of you didn't know that Kramnik has played 1...b6!?. He is probably aware that White has a winning attack, e.g. 18.♖af1! (instead of 18.dxc5) 18...c4 19.♘xc4 bxc4 20.♗xc4! ♔h8 21.♖xf7 ♖xf7 22.♖xf7 ♕d6 23.♕g4 and so this perhaps explains why Kramnik chose this system to play (as White) four years later against Ehlvest (see note to move 9).

12.♕f3

White could also try 12.g3 g5 13.gxf4 (or the murky 13.a4 ♘c6 14.♕e2 0-0-0 15.a5!? ♘xa5 16.♗a6 with complications in Spassky-Miles, Niksic 1983) 13...gxf4 14.♕g4 ♘d7 15.♖xf4 ♕g6 (15...♕e6!?) 16.♕g3 ♖g8, Simonet Pons-Mellado Trivino, Andorra 2001, when White probably kept a slight pull due to Black's broken kingside.

12...g5 13.♖ae1 ♕e7 14.g3 ♘d7 15.gxf4 gxf4 16.♕xf4 0-0-0

Cabrera-Pons Sastre, Palma de Mallorca 2002, with adequate counterplay.

Variation C – Blatny's ...e5

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6!? 4.♕e2

For 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘gf3 c5 6.c3 see Variation

D. There are of course all sorts of transpositions possible between the move orders 3.♗d3 ♘f6 and 3.♗d3 e6.

4...♘c6!?

Now it's the d-pawn under attack. Very funny, but has Black forgotten about his central pawns?

5.c3

Certainly not 5.♘f3 ♘b4 when White 'loses' his attacking bishop. 5.e5 would be answered by 5...♘xd4 6.♕e3 ♗xg2 (or similarly 6...♘xc2+ 7.♗xc2 ♗xg2 8.exf6 ♗xh1) 7.♕xd4 ♗xh1 8.cxf6 exf6 with three pawns and a rook for a pair of knights. Black shouldn't be worse.

5...e5!

Striking back! This system has been extensively played by Pavel Blatny. The Czech GM has some useful scalps to his name, suggesting that there is a serious side to this odd-looking selection of moves.

6.♘f3

This is the most precise, as Black now has to really reply with 6...d6 which limits the active opportunities for Black's dark-squared bishop.

The problem with playing 6.d5 immediately for White is that Black can sometimes come to c5 (or occasionally b4) with his bishop giving some activity and there are less space constraints. 6...♘e7 and now:

– 7.f4 turned out disastrously in the following game: 7...exf4 8.c4 d6 9.♘f3 ♘g6 10.c5 dxe5 11.♘xe5 ♗b4+ 12.♔d1 0-0 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.♗xf4 ♖e8 15.♕c2 ♗xd5 16.cxd5 ♘xd5 17.♗d2 ♘e3+ 18.♗xe3 ♖xe3, 0-1 Hermansen-Blatny, Los Angeles 2002.

– 7.c4 ♘g6 8.♘c3 ♗b4 (also tempting is 8...♗c5).

– 7.♘f3 ♘g6 8.g3 (after 8.0-0 ♗c5!? the obvious 9.b4 doesn't necessarily inconvenience Black: 9...♗e7 10.♘a3 0-0 11.♘c4 d6 12.g3 c6 as in Plenkovic-Polak, Split 2003, and White could not maintain his d5-pawn) 8...c6 (or even 8...♗c5 9.♘bd2 h5!? 10.h4 ♘g4 11.0-0 a5 12.♘c4 ♕e7, Esserman-Blatny, New York rapid 2003) 9.c4 ♗c5 10.♘bd2 a5, Bennett-Ivanov, New Hampshire 2000, and Black has achieved dynamic development. After the further 11.♘f1 0-0 12.♘e3 b5! 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.cxb5 ♗xe4 Black was already better.

6...d6 7.0-0

Now the move 7.d5! makes a great deal of sense. If Black has less space and no easy route to counterplay White must be able to keep an edge. Here are some practical examples:

– 7...♘b8!? 8.c4 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♘e8 12.0-0 g6 13.b4 ♘g7 14.♘b3 f5 15.f3 f4 with play as in the main line Classical King's Indian, Chiburdanidze-Jackova, Elista 2004.

– 7...♘e7 8.a4 a6 9.a5 ♕c8?! (9...bxa5 10.♖xa5 c6 is more combative) 10.♘a3 ♘d7 11.♗e3 ♘g6 12.g3 ♗e7 13.h4 with the initiative on both wings for White as in Al Modiahki-Blatny, Southampton 2003.

Instead, the move 7.♗g5 doesn't test Black, as early exchanges ease his problems: 7...♗e7 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♘bd2 ♘d7 10.♗xe7 ♘xe7 11.0-0-0 0-0 12.♗b5 c6 13.♗c4 b5 14.♗b3 ♘g6 15.h4 ♘f4 16.♕f1 ♕e7, Agamaliev-Blatny, Blitz 2004, with equality.

7...♘d7 8.a4

The advance of the a-pawn is the most testing plan at White's disposal. Others haven't worried Pavel Blatny:

– 8.♗a6 ♕c8 9.♗xb7 ♕xb7 10.a4 g6 11.d5 ♘e7 12.a5 ♗g7 13.c4 0-0 14.♘c3 h6 15.♘e1 ♘c5 16.♗e3 f5 Baklan-Blatny, Bastia 2003, or

– 8.♘a3 ♗e7 9.♗e3 ♗f6 10.♖fd1 0-0 11.♖ac1 ♔h8 12.♗b1 ♖g8 13.b4 g5, Epishin-Blatny, Bastia 2003, and in both cases Black had found a way to generate counterplay.

8...♗e7

Stopping the a-pawn in its tracks has a downside, as Gata Kamsky demonstrated: 8...a5 9.d5 ♘e7 10.♗b5 h6 11.♘bd2 ♘g6 12.b4 ♗e7 13.bxa5 ♖xa5 14.♘c4 ♖a7 15.♗e3 0-0 16.a5 ♘c5 17.♗xc5 ♘f4 18.♕c2 bxc5, Kamsky-Blatny, New York rapid 2004, where 19.a6 left Black facing an uphill struggle.

9.d5 ♘cb8 10.a5 bxa5 11.♗e3?!

White should recapture as the further course of the game seemed fine for Black. So if 11.♖xa5 c6 12.dxc6 (or 12.b4!?) 12...♘xc6 13.♖a1 White probably has a small pull due to a slightly superior pawn structure.

11...c6 12.c4 ♘a6 13.♘bd2 ♘ac5 14.♖a3 f5 15.exf5 0-0

Shabalov-Blatny, New York rapid 2004, with excellent counterplay.

Variation D – ...c5 and ...d5

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 e6

Less forcing than 3... ♘f6.

4.♘f3

Against 4.c4 an interesting try is 4...♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♘c6, see Variation E.

4...c5 5.c3

The pawn structure after 5.♘c3 cxd4 6.♘xd4 is reminiscent of some variations of the Sicilian Defence. Black obtained interesting play after 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 ♘ge7 8.0-0 ♘g6 9.♖e1 ♗c5 10.♗g5 ♕b8 11.a3 0-0 12.h4?! ♘ce5 in Karayanni-Miles, Komotini 1992.

5...♘f6

6.♕e2

● 6.♗g5 leads to ceding the bishop for nothing special: 6...h6 7.♗xf6 ♕xf6 8.♘bd2 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6 10.e5 ♕d8 11.a3 ♗e7 12.♕e2 d6 and Black has no particular problems, Rausis-Plaskett, Port Erin 1998, a game that transposed from the Torre Attack (1.d4, 2.♘f3 and 3.♗g5).

● After 6.♘bd2 Black has several plausible alternatives:

– Miles used to play 6...♗e7, e.g. 7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♗a6 and by exchanging off a pair of bishops White's attacking chances are reduced, e.g. 9.♗xa6 ♘xa6 10.♕c2 ♘c7 11.d5 d6 12.dxe6 ♘xe6 13.♘b3 0-0 14.♖d1 ♕c8 in Lputian-Miles, Los Angeles 1991, the

isolated d-pawn wasn't a significant factor.
– 6...d5 can easily transpose to the main line.
– The most precise way of entering a French-style structure is probably to play 6...♘c6 and after 7.a3 to keep a hold of b4, only then to play 7...d5, e.g. 8.e5 ♘d7 9.b4!? (9.0-0 a5 10.♖e1 c4 11.♗c2 b5 12.♘f1 h6 13.h4 b4 Narciso Dublan-Lputian, Linares 1996, gives Black an easy ride) 9...♕c7 10.0-0 cxd4 11.cxd4 a5 12.b5 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♕c3 14.♘2b3 a4 15.♕d2 ♕c7 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♘d4 ♘c5, Jonkman-Blatny, Internet rapid 2002, and Naer-Blatny, New York rapid 2002, with unclear complications.
The position after 6.♘bd2 can also be reached via the move order 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘gf3 c5 6.c3.
● 6.e5 ♘d5 yields a c3-Sicilian with an early ...b6. This is generally recognized as a respectable variation for Black. Here are some examples:
– 7.0-0 ♗e7 (also reasonable is 7...♘c6 8.a3 cxd4 9.cxd4 d6) 8.a3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗a6 10.♗xa6 ♘xa6 11.♕d3 ♘ac7 12.♘bd2 0-0 13.♘e4 f6 14.exf6 gxf6 15.♗d2 ♔h8, Maiwald-Miles, Ostend 1991.
– 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 ♘c6 10.♗e4 ♘c7 11.♖d1 b5 12.♘bd2 a6 13.♘b3 ♕c8 Lautier-Miles, Biel 1992, and White could find nothing better than inducing unclear complications with 14.♗g5 ♗xg5 15.♘xg5 h6 16.♕h5 ♘xe5 17.♘c5 g6 18.♕e2 d5.

6...♗e7 7.0-0 d5 8.e5

Here 8.exd5 isn't a serious test: 8...♕xd5!? (or 8...♗xd5 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗g5 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♕c7 with fairly sound development but White has a slight initiative) 9.♗b5+ ♗c6 10.dxc5 ♕xc5 11.a4 0-0 12.♗e3 ♕h5 13.♘d4 ♕xe2 14.♗xe2 ♗b7 with full equality, Zhulanov-Turikov, Tula 2004.

8...♘fd7 9.♗e3

Sometimes 9.a3 is played here but this does not necessarily change the character of the position: 9...c4 (9...a5!? has the point that if White plays 10.b3 – to dissuade ...c4 – then 10...♗a6 exchanging the light-squared bishops can be tried. After 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♘bd2 ♕c8 14.c4 ♘c7 15.a4 ♘b8 16.♖ac1 ♘c6 17.♖fd1 ♕b7 Black held firm in Juswanto-Rogers, Bali 2000) 10.♗c2 b5 11.♘bd2 a5 12.♖e1 ♘c6 13.♘f1 h5 14.g3 b4 15.h4 bxc3?!. Black should delay this capture until he's better prepared to meet any white pressure on the b-file. Moiseenko-Bauer, Bilbao rapid/blitz 2004.

9...♘c6 10.a3

In order to avoid ...cxb4 cxb4 ♘b4 hitting the bishop.

10...c4 11.♗c2 b5

Not just to block the wing, Christian Bauer aims to handle the position dynamically. After the alternative 11...♘a5 12.♘bd2 h6 13.♘e1 ♕c7 14.h4 0-0-0 15.h5 ♖dg8, Baumegger-Freitag, Austria Staatsliga 2002/03, Black was ready and waiting.

12.♘bd2 a5 13.♘e1 h5!

For space and influence.

14.f4 g6 15.♘ef3 b4!

Dautov-Bauer, Gothenburg 2005. In this blocked position, Black has matters under control on both wings.

Variation E – English Defence

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 e6

A potential problem with this move order in the 'Owen's' is that after 4.c4 play has transposed to a typical position from the English Defence. Instead of reproducing lots of standard theory, I'm proposing a SOS-style line that has been tried by Short and Speelman.

4.c4 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2

Self-pinning with 5.♘c3 yields a line where Black gets good play against the centre e.g. 5...f5:

– 6.♕h5+ g6 7.♕e2 ♘f6 8.f3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 (9.e5? is a famous blunder that has been repeated on several occasions(!): 9...♘xd4 10.♕f2 ♘h5 11.♕xd4 ♗c5, Adorjan-Spassky, Toluca Interzonal 1982, and the Hungarian GM was probably very embarrassed!) 9...fxe4 10.fxe4 e5 11.d5 ♘d4 12.♗xd4 exd4 13.a3 ♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 dxc3 15.♘f3 0-0 16.0-0 ♕e7, Gorbatow-Ehlvest, St.Petersburg 1994, with complications.

– or 6.♕e2 ♘f6 7.♗g5 0-0 8.♘f3? (8.f3 h6 9.♗h4 is better, with chances for equality!) 8...fxe4 9.♗xf6 exd3 10.♗xd8 dxe2 11.♗xc7 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 ♘c6 13.♔xe2 ♘xd4+ 14.♔d3 ♘xf3, Deriabin-Ivanova, Mariupol 2003, and Black had won a pawn.

5...♘c6!? 6.♘f3

● Play is often comparable to our main line after 6.♘e2 ♕f6 e.g.:

– 7.♗xb4 ♘xb4 8.♘bc3 ♘xd3+ 9.♕xd3 a6 10.0-0 ♘e7 11.f4. White's big pawn front is impressive but Black is ready to counter as desired after: 11...♕g6! 12.f5 (after 12.d5 then 12...f5 yields counterchances) 12...exf5 13.♘f4 ♕g5 14.exf5 0-0-0 15.♘e4 ♕h6 16.♘g3 d5, Neverov-Short, Ohrid 2001, with a complicated struggle.

– 7.e5 ♗xd2+ 8.♕xd2 ♕h6 9.♕xh6 ♘xh6 10.♗e4 0-0-0 11.♘bc3 d6 (White can't maintain his advanced pawn front) 12.exd6 cxd6 equal, Ippolito-Speelman, Blitz 2000.

● 6.d5 ♗xd2+ 7.♕xd2 ♘e5 8.♘c3 ♘h6 9.f4 ♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 f5. This may look like a game from the post-hypermodern era but it isn't! After 11.e5 we have Boden-Owen, London 1858(!). Owen now played 11...g5 but I would prefer 11...♕h4+ 12.g3 ♕e7 when White has space but Black has potential!

● After 6.♗xb4 ♘xb4 the threat against e4 enables Black to eliminate White's remaining bishop.

6...♕f6

Very provocative!

7.d5 ♗xd2+ 8.♕xd2

White has a significant space advantage.

8...♘ce7!?

8...♘d4 exchanges off a pair of knights and so eases congestion. 9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 10.♘c3 a6 11.0-0-0 ♘e7, with a playable game. Although White has his space, Black has a solid position and hopes to nibble away at White's centre.

9.♘c3 a6 10.0-0 ♕h6 11.♕c2

Retaining queens keeps up the pressure on Black.

11...♘f6 12.e5 ♘h5 13.♗e4 0-0!

An enterprising pawn sacrifice.

14.dxe6 ♗xe4 15.exf7+ ♖xf7 16.♕xe4 ♖af8

with practical chances for the pawn. Dautov-Speelman, Lippstadt 2000.

Variation F – English Opening

1.e4 b6 2.c4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e5!?

Fixing the hole on d4. It's as if to say 'I hope you regret not having taken the chance to play d2-d4!'.

4.♘f3

4.d3 ♘c6 5.g3 ♗c5 6.♗g2 ♘ge7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 a5 (although 1...b6 can be associated with a 'light-squared' strategy, faced with a wall (c4-d3-e4) Short has dug in on the dark squares) 9.♗e3 d6 10.d4 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♘c6 13.♗xc5 bxc5 14.e5! (otherwise White risks being worse) 14...dxe5 15.♘a4 ♕d6 16.♕d5 ♘d8 17.♕xc5 ♗xg2 18.♕xd6 cxd6 19.♔xg2 ♘e6, Kortchnoi-Short, Groningen 1997, with approximate equality.

4...♘c6!? 5.d4

White can also try 5.a3 to avoid ...♗b4. For instance 5...♘f6 (otherwise 5...a5!? when after 6.d4 exd4 7.♘xd4 ♗c5 8.♘db5 ♘ge7 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗f4, Varga-Mukic, Kastav 2002, Black could consider 10...♘e5 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 d6) 6.b4 a5 7.b5 ♘d4 8.d3 ♘xf3+ 9.♕xf3 ♗c5 10.♘e2 h6, Varga-Breder, Budapest 2001, and after 11.g4 h5! Black was fine.

5...exd4 6.♘xd4 ♗b4

Black pins and toys with the idea of crippling White's queenside pawns with ...♗xc3+.

7.♘xc6

If White proceeds quietly with 7.♗e2,then 7...♘f6 8.f3 0-0 9.♗c3 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖e8, Chernin-Benen, New York 2003, left Black with a solid enough game and better pawns. 7.♘f5 can be met by 7...♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♕f6.

7...♗xc3+

Possible was 7...♗xc6!? when 8.♕d4 can again be met by 8...♕f6.

8.bxc3 ♗xc6 9.♕d4 ♕f6

10.♗d3 ♕g6 11.0-0 ♘e7 12.♗a3 d6 13.f3 ♕g5

White has a lead in development and the bishop pair for his shaky pawns.

14.f4 ♕a5 15.♗b4 ♕h5 16.♖f3

White shouldn't take the g-pawn: 16.♕xg7 ♖g8 17.♕d4 ♕h3! 18.♖f2 ♘f5!.

16...♗d7 17.♖g3 ♖g8 18.♕e3

Now 18.♖xg7 is playable, but after 18...0-0-0 19.♖xg8 ♖xg8 20.♕f2 ♘g6 Black has reasonable compensation.

18...c5 19.♗a3 0-0-0

Delchev-Blatny, Budapest Zonal 2000, and Black was doing OK and went on to win.

CHAPTER 8

Adrian Mikhalchishin

Following Smyslov and Réti

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4

This variation against the King's Indian Defence and the Grünfeld Defence was devised by the great innovator Richard Réti, but popularised by ex-world champion Vasily Smyslov, and after him by Viktor Kortchnoi, and the *Informator* chief Zdenko Krnic.

The idea of the opening is similar to the Sokolsky Opening 1.b4, and the variation 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c6 3.g3 b5! – which has a good reputation. In this opening there is clearly less theory, and it is important that White immediately initiates play on the queenside. Another method of playing this variation has been suggested by the English grandmaster Keith Arkell: 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2, and White delays c2-c4.

A Grünfeld set-up with 5...c6 and ...d5

□ **Adrian Mikhalchishin**
■ **Arkady Naiditsch**
Dortmund 1998

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.e3 c6

Black may also consider 5...b6 6.d4 d5 7.♕b3 c5 8.dxc5 bxc5 9.b5 ♘b7 10.♘bd2 a6 11.a4 ♘bd7 12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.♗c4 ♘b6 14.♗xd5 ♕xd5 15.bxa6 ♖xa6 16.a5 ♕xb3 with complete equality. ½-½ Psakhis-Mikhalchishin, Riga 1985.

6.d4

Smyslov has played the original 6.♗e2 d5

7.♕c1!?, after 7...♗g4 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘bd7 10.0-0 e5 11.d3 ♖e8 12.♖d1 ♕e7 play was equal in Smyslov-Ftacnik, Beer Sheva 1990.

6...a5

Grünfeld players will be tempted to play 6...d5 here. However, in contrast to the Grünfeld Defence, White now has 7.♘bd2!.

Now Black has many possibilities.

– 7...a5 (trying to lift the positional bind) 8.b5 cxb5 9.cxb5 ♘bd7 10.♗d3 ♘e8 11.♗a3 (or 11.h4!? – beginning an attack after the retreat of the knight) 11...♘b6 12.0-0 ♘d6 13.♖c1 ♗f5 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.♗xf5 gxf5 16.♕c2 e6 17.♕c7 with advantage in the ending, Kortchnoi-Rogers, Novi Sad ol 1990.

– 7...♗g4 8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 b5 11.cxb5 cxb5 12.a4 bxa4 13.♕xa4 ♘b6 14.♕b3 ♕d7 15.0-0 ♖fc8 16.♖a5 e6 17.♖fa1 ♖c7 18.♖c5 ♖b8 19.♗e2! with the better game for White, Kortchnoi-Belotti, Novi Sad ol 1990.

– 7...♗f5 8.♗e2 ♘e4 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.f3 ♘d6 14.c5 ♘f5 15.♕d3 e6 16.a4 ♖e8 17.g4 ♘h6 18.f4 with advantage to White, Smyslov-Tatai, Palma de Mallorca 1967.

– 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 (play is equal after 8.♗e2 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♘df6 10.a4 ♗g4 11.b5 ♘xd2 12.♘xd2 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♕d7 14.♖fc1 ♖fc8) 8...dxe4 9.♘d2 f5 10.♗e2 ♗e6 (10...e5 11.dxe5 ♕g5 12.0-0±) 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♕c2 ♕c7 13.♘b3 ♗f7 14.♖fd1 ♘f6 15.a4 with a spatial advantage for White, Kempinski-Moor, Zug 2001.

7.b5

Gaining space on the queenside – as in the Sokolsky.

7...cxb5 8.cxb5 d5 9.♗e2 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♘b6 11.♘bd2 ♗f5 12.♖c1

12...♘e8 More logical is 12...♕d6, preparing 13...♖fc8. **13.♗a3 ♘d6 14.♕b3 ♗e6** There is a battle in progress for the c4-point, but the more aggressive 14...a4 should have been played. **15.♘g5 ♗f5 16.♗c5 ♗h6 17.♘gf3 ♗e6 18.♘e5 ♖e8 19.♖fd1 ♖c8 20.♕a3 ♘a8** A sad necessity. **21.♕a4 ♗f5 22.♗f3 ♘c7 23.♗b6 ♘dxb5 24.♗e2** The pin is decisive. **24...♘d6 25.♕xa5 ♖a8 26.♕b4 ♖c8 27.♕a5 ♖a8 28.♕c3 ♘cb5 29.♕c5 ♕c8 30.♗xb5 ♕xc5 31.♖xc5 ♘xb5 32.♖xb5 ♖xa2 33.♖xd5 ♖b2 34.♘dc4 1-0**

King's Indian type of set-up:
4...0-0 5.e3 d6 6.d4

Now Black has to choose – whether to play e7-e5 immediately and go in for forcing play, or prepare this advance in King's Indian style.

□ **Bartlomiej Macieja**
■ **Jacek Gdanski**
Warsaw ch-POL 2002 (3)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.e3 d6 6.d4 e5

7.dxe5

Black should know what to do after 7.♗e2. It is bad to close the centre before White has castled kingside: 7...e4? 8.♘fd2 ♖e8 9.♘c3 h5 10.♕c2 ♕e7 11.h3 c6 12.a4 ♗f5 13.b5 ♘bd7 14.a5 c5 15.♘b3 ♖ac8 16.a6 b6 17.0-0-0! cxd4 18.♘xd4± and the white king feels fine on the queenside, Krnic-Paunovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1983

Correct is 7...cxd4 8.♕xd4 ♘c6 9.♕c3 ♖e8 10.0-0 ♕e7 11.b5 ♘d8 12.♘bd2 ♘e6 13.♘b3 ♘e4 14.♕c2 ♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♘6c5 and Black has no problems, Sokolsky-Lilienthal, Kiev 1954.

7...♘g4

Of course 7...♘fd7 8.♘c3 ♘xe5 would transpose to the main game. Note that Black does not obtain enough compensation after 8...♘c6?! 9.cxd6 ♘xb4 10.dxc7 ♕xc7 11.♗e2 ♕a5 12.0-0 ♘c5 13.♘d4± Krnic-Hazai, Vrnjacka Banja 1984.

So Black should (after 7...♘fd7 8.♘c3) continue with the standard 8...dxe5, when after 9.♗e2 the roads diverge:

– 9...a5 10.a3 c6 11.0-0 ♕e7 12.♕b3 b6 13.♖fd1 ♘a6 14.♘e4 ♘f6 15.♘g3 e4 16.♘d2 ♗b7 17.♖ab1 with advantage to White, Kempinski-Szelag, Warsaw 2002.

– 9...e4!? 10.♘d2 f5 11.♘b3 ♘e5 12.♕d5+ ♔h8 is stronger, Djurkovic-Mazi, Feffernitz 2000.

8.♘c3 ♘xe5 9.♘xe5 ♗xe5

After 9...dxe5 10.♗e2 c6 11.0-0 ♕c7 12.♕b3 ♗e6 13.b5 ♖c8 14.♗a3 ♕h4 15.g3 ♕h6 16.♘e4 ♘d7 17.♖fd1± the weakness of the d6-square is very perceptible, Mikhalchishin-Popovych, Lvov 1999.

10.♗e2

Here 10.f4 might be a better option: 10...♗g7 11.♗e2 a5 12.a3 ♗e6 13.0-0 ♘a6 14.♕b3 f5 15.♘a4 axb4 16.axb4 b5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕c3+ ♕f6 19.cxb5 ♕xc3 20.♘xc3 ♘xb4 21.♗f3 and Black had serious problems in the endgame in Mikhalchishin-Cigan, Bled 1998.

10...a5

The game Krnic-Van Delft, Wijk aan Zee 1999, went: 10...♘c6 11.♕b3 ♗e6 12.0-0 a5 13.b5 ♘b8 14.f4 ♗g7 15.e4 ♘d7 16.f5 ♘c5 17.♕c2 ♗d7, and now 18.♘d5 would have led to a big advantage for White.

11.a3

Less good is 11.b5 ♘d7 12.♘a4 ♕h4 13.g3 ♕f6 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖c1 ♗h3 16.f4 ♘d7 17.♗g4 ♗xg4 18.♕xg4 ♕e7 and White has weak squares at e3 and e4, Doncea-Chr.Pedersen, Budva 2003.

11...♕h4!

This is an accurate move to prevent White from castling. White may now regret that he refrained from playing f4 when he had the chance (on his 10th move). After 11...♗c6 12.0-0 axb4 13.axb4 ♖xa1 14.♕xa1 ♘c6 15.f4 ♗g7 16.♘e4 ♗xb2 17.♕xb2 f5 18.♘g5 ♕f6 19.♕d2 ♔g7 20.♖c1 ♗g8 21.b5 ♘e7 22.c5 White seizes the initiative, Mikhalchishin-Rasik, Brno 1991.

12.g3

This weakens the kingside, but the alternatives 12.♘a4 ♗xb2 13.♘xb2 ♕f6∓, and 12.b5 ♘d7 13.♖b1 ♘c5 14.♘d5 ♗f5 15.♗xe5 dxe5∓ are worse.

12...♕h3 13.♗f1

Here 13.f4 is bad because of 13...♕g2!.

13...♕g4

Also sufficient is 13...♕e6!?.

14.♗e2 ♕h3 15.♗f1 ♕g4

16.f3!?

Avoiding the draw is risky.

16...♕e6!∓

After 16...♕h5 17.♗g2 ♗h3 18.0-0 ♗xg2 19.♔xg2 and next 20.f4 White stands rather better.

17.♔f2 ♖e8 18.♕c1

The e3 and a1 squares must be simultaneously defended.

18...axb4 19.axb4 ♖xa1 20.♗xa1 c6!

The d5 square has to be defended. After 20...♘a6 21.f4 ♗g7 22.♘d5!± Black has problems.

21.♘e4 f5 22.♗xe5 ♕xe5 23.♘g5 ♘d7 24.h4 ♘f6 25.♗e2 h6 26.♘h3 ♗e6 27.♖d1 ♗f7 28.♕a3 ♘h5

28...d5!? would have led to a considerable sharpening of the struggle.

29.f4 ♕e4 30.♕c3 ♘f6! 31.♖xd6 ♘g4+ 32.♗xg4 fxg4 33.♘g1 ♕h1 34.♕d3 ♕h2+ 35.♔f1 ♕xg3 36.♖xg6+!

White has to save himself by perpetual check.

36...♗xg6 37.♕xg6+ ♔f8 38.♕f6+ ♔g8 39.♕g6+ ♔f8 40.♕f6+ ½-½

□ **Alexey Dreev**
■ **David Bronstein**
Reykjavik 1990 (9)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.e3 d6 6.d4 ♘bd7

Preparing e7-e5 by 6...♖e8 is less good: 7.♗e2 e5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 9.♘c3 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 ♗xc5 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.a3 ♗e6 13.♕d2 ♗g7 14.♘d5 ♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♘e5 16.♕d4 with advantage to White, Krnic-Knaak, Wijk aan Zee II 1988.

The inclusion of 6...a5 in this variation can in principle be considered advantageous to Black: 7.b5 ♘bd7 (after 7...e5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 9.♘c3 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.♗e2 ♗e6 12.♕d2 ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘b6 14.f4 ♗g7 15.♘e4 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2 f5 17.♘d2 ♕e7 18.♕d4! White is slightly better, Mikhalchishin-Zimmerman, Bled 1999) 8.♗e2 e5 9.0-0 exd4 10.exd4 ♖e8 11.♘bd2 ♘f8! 12.♖e1 ♘e6 13.g3 h6 14.♗f1 ♘g5 15.♘xg5 hxg5 16.♗g2 d5! with excellent counterplay, Nimzowitsch-Réti, Karlsbad 1923.

7.♗e2

It is possible to delay the development of the kingside by 7.♕b3 c5! (after 7...♖e8 8.♗e2

e5 9.♘c3 c6 10.0-0 ♘f8 11.d5 cxd5 12.cxd5 ♘8d7 13.♘d2 a6 14.a4 e4 15.♖ac1 White has the freer game, Mikhalchishin-Vuckovic, Nova Gorica 1998) 8.♗e2 b6 9.♘bd2 e6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.bxc5 dxc5 12.a4 ♘e4 13.♘xe4 ♗xe4 14.♖fd1 cxd4 15.exd4 ♕c7 16.a5 ♖ab8 with a solid position for Black, Miles-Polugaevsky, London 1984.

7...e5 8.♘c3 ♖e8 9.0-0

White should not be in a hurry to castle, and therefore other continuations are of interest:

– 9.b5!? c6 10.a4 h5 11.h3 e4 12.♘d2 c5 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.♘b3 ♘xb3 15.♕xb3 ♗e6 16.0-0 ♖c8 17.♖fd1 and the weakness at d6 is more real than the one at c4, Gashimov-Gadjily, Baku 1999.

– 9.♕b3 cxd4 10.♘xd4 a5 11.a3 axb4 12.axb4 ♖xa1+ 13.♗xa1 ♘e5 14.0-0 c6 15.♗b2 with a small advantage, Mikhalchishin-Tratar, Ptuj 1998.

9...♕e7?!

Too complicated. Clearly better was 9...e4 10.♘d2 ♘f8 11.♖e1 h5! 12.f3 exf3 13.♗xf3 ♘8h7 14.♘de4 ♗g4! 15.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16.b5 (½-½ Mikhalchishin-Reinderman, Groningen 1992) 16...♕d7 with equality.

10.♘b5! e4

Apparently Black had counted on this intermediate move. Dreev's reply throws a spanner in the works.

11.♘xc7! exf3 12.♗xf3 ♘b6 13.♘xe8 ♕xe8 14.♕b3

In this position with a closed structure the rook and two pawns are stronger than the two pieces.

14...♘e4 15.♖fd1 d5?!

A nervy sacrifice. Better was 15...♗d7.

16.cxd5 f5 17.♖ac1 ♕f7

If 17...♗d7, then 18.d6+ ♔h8 19.♖c7 ♗a4 20.d5! ♗xb3 21.♖xg7!.

18.♖c5 ♗d7 19.♖c7 ♖b8 20.♗e2 ♘d6 21.b5! ♘e8 22.♖c5 ♗f8 23.a4! The pawn chain is more important than the exchange. **23...♘c8 24.f3 b6 25.♖c2 ♘cd6 26.♗a3 ♖d8 27.♖f1!** Preparing to strengthen the centre by e3-e4. **27...♕e7 28.♖e1 ♕h4 29.g3 ♕h6 30.♗f1 g5 31.♗b2 ♕g6 32.e4! fxe4 33.fxe4 ♘xe4 34.d6+ ♗e6** After 34...♔h8 35.♗d3 ♘8xd6 36.d5+ ♔g8 37.♗a3 the pins are very unpleasant. **35.♗c4 ♗xc4 36.♕xc4+ ♔g7 37.♖xe4! ♘xd6** After 37...♕xe4 38.d5+ wins. **38.♕c7+ ♔g8 39.♕xd8 ♕xe4 40.♕xg5+ 1-0**

Variations with c7-c5:
4...0-0 5.e3 d6 6.d4 c5

□ **Adrian Mikhalchishin**
■ **Peter Svidler**
Warsaw 1999

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.e3 d6 6.d4 c5 7.b5

This is a typical continuation, although other interpretations of the position are also possible:

– 7.a3 cxd4 8.exd4 e5! 9.♗e2 (9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♘xe5 ♖e8∓ is very dangerous for White) 9...e4 10.♘fd2 d5 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♘c3 ♖e8 14.♖e1?! (14.♘b3 is clearly better) 14...♘f5 with an excellent game for Black, Kortchnoi-Nunn, San Francisco 1995.

– 7.bxc5 dxc5 8.♗e2 cxd4 (White has the

advantage after 8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 ♕a5 10.0-0 ♘xd2 11.♘xd2 ♕c7 12.♘b3 cxd4 13.exd4 ♘c6 14.♕d2 ♖d8 15.d5, Kozomara-Kerkhoff, Sombor 1966) 9.exd4 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♗f5 11.d5 ♘a5 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.♘d2 ♖c8 14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.♘4b3! ♘xb3 16.axb3 e6 17.♗a3 ♖fe8 18.c5 ♕d8 19.d6 and White has a serious advantage, Efimov-Romanishin, Reggio Emilia 1999/00.

7...cxd4 8.exd4 e5

8...♘bd7 9.♗e2 b6 10.d5 ♘c5 11.♘d4 ♕c7 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.♘d2 e5 14.♘c6 with advantage to White, Mikhalchishin-Ankerst, Bled 1992.

9.♗e2

Stronger than 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗e2 (bad is 11.♗xe5? ♖e8 12.♗e2 ♖xe5! 13.♘xe5 ♘fd7−+, Myers-Dubeck, Chicago 1973) 11...e4 and Black has a good game.

In reply to 9.dxe5, less good is 9...♘g4 10.♗e2 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♘c3 ♘c5 14.♗a3 with advantage, Papazov-P.Balogh, Tallinn 1997.

9...e4 10.♘fd2 ♖e8 11.0-0 h5! 12.♘c3 ♗f5 13.♖e1 a6 14.a4 axb5 15.axb5 ♖xa1 16.♕xa1 ♘bd7 17.♘f1 ♘f8

18.♘e3

Here 18.d5 ♘8d7 19.♘e3 was stronger, with some advantage to White.

18...♘e6! 19.♘cd5!?

Here White had several tempting continuations. Among them are: 19.♕a7!?, 19.♘xf5, and 19.d5. Such an abundance is usually an indication of an advantage for White.

19...♘xd5 20.♘xd5 h4 21.♘e3?!

A 'gentle' move. 21.b6 or 21.♕a7 was better.

21...♕a8!

Unexpectedly taking play into an endgame with the idea of exploiting the weakness of the d4 pawn.

22.♖d1

Here 22.♕c1!? came into consideration.

22...♕xa1 23.♗xa1 ♖a8 24.g3 ♗h3 25.♗f1

It really would have been better to take the pawn – 25.gxh4!?

25...♗xf1 26.♔xf1 h3!

After White's inaccuracies Black is now clearly better in the ending.

27.♘d5 ♘g5 28.♗c3 ♖a2 29.c5 dxc5 30.dxc5 ♗xc3 31.♘xc3 ♖c2 32.♘a4 e3 33.fxe3 ♘f3 0-1

The method of Réti and Smyslov

Both these great players preferred the double fianchetto, instead of the development of the bishop at e2. The simplest way for Black is to decide on the analogous symmetrical fianchetto.

□ **Vladimir Akopian**
■ **Alexander Khalifman**
Las Vegas 1999 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.g3 d6

A King's Indian set-up. However, Black has several good and practicable plans:

● 5...b6 6.♗g2 ♗b7 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 (8.d4 c5 9.a3 ♘bd7 10.♘c3 e6 11.♕b3 ♕e7 12.♖ac1 ♖fd8 13.♖fd1 ♘g4 14.♘b5 ♘ge5 with counterplay, Mikhalchishin-Golubovic, Bern 1995) 8...♘bd7 9.♘bd2 e5 10.♕c2 ♖e8

11.♖fd1 a5 12.a3 h6 13.♘f1 c5 14.b5 ♘f8 15.e3 ♕c7 16.d4 ♗e4 with equality, as in the source game Réti-Capablanca, New York 1924.

● 5...c6 6.♗g2 d5 (after 6...a5!? 7.bxa5 ♕xa5 8.0-0 d6 9.d3 ♕h5 10.♘bd2 ♗h3 11.♕c2 ♘bd7 12.♖fb1 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♕a5! the game is level, Taimanov-Gligoric, Lvov 1962) 7.cxd5 (the more restrained 7.♘a3?! led after 7...♕b6 8.♕b3 ♘a6 9.♖b1 ♗f5 10.c5 ♕xb4! 11.♕xb4 ♘xb4 12.♗xf6 ♗xb1 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘xb1 ♘xa2∓ to a position where the rook and two pawns are stronger than the bishop and knight, Aronian-Yandemirov, Linares 2000) 7...♘xd5 (satisfactory is 7...cxd5 8.0-0 a6 9.a4 ♗g4 10.d3 ♕b6 11.♘bd2! ♘c6 12.♖b1 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 e6 14.b5 axb5 15.axb5 ♘c7 with equality, ½-½ Matulovic-Ivkov, Palma de Mallorca 1967) 8.♗xg7 ♔xg7 9.a3 a5! 10.bxa5 ♕xa5 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♕c2 ♘7f6 13.d3 ♖d8 14.♖c1 ♘b6 15.♘bd2 ♘a4 16.♘c4 ♕h5 with adequate counterplay, Emma-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1973.

● 5...d5!? (immediately transposing into a Grünfeld Defence) 6.cxd5 (after 6.♘a3 a5 7.b5 dxc4 8.♗g2 ♗e6 9.0-0 ♗d5 10.♕c2 c6 11.♖fe1 cxb5 12.e4 ♗c6 13.♘d4 ♘a6 Black has an excellent position, Vokac-M.Pribyl, Turnov 1996) 6...♘xd5 7.♗xg7 ♔xg7 8.♕b3 ♘f6 (after 8...♕d6 9.a3 ♕f6 10.♘c3 ♗e6 11.♕b2 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 ♕xc3 13.dxc3 ♘d7 14.♗g2 Nikolaidis-Katsenos, Ikaria 1993 14...♗d5 the game is equal) 9.♗g2 ♘c6 (9...a5! 10.b5 c6 is stronger) 10.0-0 e5 11.d3 ♗g4 12.♘bd2, Réti-Pokorny, Mährisch Ostrau 1923. The game is equal after 12...♖b8 13.b5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4.

6.♗g2 e5 7.d3

After 7.0-0 ♖e8 (the aggressive 7...e4!? 8.♘e1 c6 can also be tried) 8.d3 e4! (here it is better not to include 8...a5 9.a3 axb4 10.axb4 ♖xa1 11.♗xa1 e4 12.dxe4 ♘xe4 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘fd2 ♘xd2 15.♕xd2 ♘c6 16.f4! ♕f6 17.c3 and White is clearly better, Smyslov-Gufeld, Moscow 1961) 9.dxe4 ♘xe4 10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.♕d4+ ♕f6 12.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 13.♘d4 c6 14.f3 ♘g5 15.♘c3 ♔e7 16.f4 ♘e6 17.♘b3 ♘d8! 18.e4 ♗e6! 19.c5 dxc5 20.♘xc5 a5!= Black held the ending, Smyslov-Boleslavsky, Leningrad 1962.

7...♘h5!

This direct implementation of the f7-f5 plan is more logical than others. If 7...♘c6, then by b5, 0-0, and a2-a4-a5 White obtains real play on the queenside.

8.♘c3

Avoiding the trap 8.0-0? e4!, although 8.♕c2 planning ♘bd2 was somewhat simpler.

8...f5 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.b5 ♘e7

Here the typical 10...♘d4 is not very good on account of 11.♘xd4 exd4 12.♘b1 followed by the knight manoeuvre ♘b1-d2-b3.

11.e4!?

Closing the centre. But 11.a4 f4 12.d4! looks rather better.

11...c5

Less good is 11...f4 12.d4!.

12.bxc6 bxc6 13.c5!

Immediately creating weaknesses in the black position.

13...d5 14.exd5 cxd5 15.♕b3

White would achieve nothing with 15.d4 ♖b8 16.♕d2 e4 17.♘e5 f4!.

15...e4! 16.dxe4?

After 16.♘g5! ♘c6 17.♘xd5 ♔h8 18.♘h3 ♖b8 19.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 20.♕c4 ♘e5 very sharp play would have begun.

16...fxe4

17.♘xe4!? ♗xb2 18.♕xb2 dxe4 19.♘g5 ♗f5!

Less good was 19...♘f6 20.♘xe4 ♘xe4 21.♗xe4 ♗h3 22.♕b3+ ♖f7 23.♖fd1 ♕c8 24.♗xa8 ♕xa8 25.f3 ♕xf3 26.♕xf3 ♖xf3 27.♖ab1 when White is not worse.

20.♘xe4 ♖b8 21.♕c3 ♘d5 22.♕a3 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♘hf6 24.♗f3 ♕c7 25.♖ac1

Here 25.♖fd1 ♘e7 26.c6 really was better, trying to sharpen the play.

25...♘e7 26.c6 ♘f5 27.♕c3 ♖bc8 28.♖fe1 ♕g7 29.♖cd1 ♖c7 30.♖e6 h5 31.♕e5 ♔h7 32.h3

Garry Kasparov thought that after 32.♗e4 White could have held the position.

32...♘g8 33.♕e4 ♘f6 34.♕e5 ♘g8 35.♕e4 ♖f6 36.♖xf6 ♘xf6 37.♕b4 ♕e7 38.♕b8 ♘d6

39.g4?

After the correct 39.♕b4! Black would have had enormous problems in converting his advantage.

39...hxg4 40.hxg4 ♘f7! 41.♔g2 ♔g7 42.♖e1 ♕d8 43.♕b2 ♘g5 44.♖e3 ♕d6! 45.♕a3 ♕xa3 46.♖xa3 ♔f7 47.♗e2 ♘e6 48.♖a4 ♘d5 49.♗f3 ♘e7 50.♔g3 ♔f6 51.♖c4 ♔e5 52.♖c1 ♘d4 53.♖e1+ ♔f6 54.♗g2 ♘exc6 55.f4 ♘e7 56.♗f1 ♖c3+ 57.♔g2 ♘c2 0-1

CHAPTER 9

Dimitri Reinderman

King's Gambit Vienna 1903

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 f5!?

Vienna, 1903. A ten player double round robin tournament is held, where every game has to start with the King's Gambit Accepted. It is a strong tournament, with Chigorin, Schlechter, Pillsbury and Marshall amongst the participants, and all but Gunsberg in the world top 20 according to the 1903 ranking list of chessmetrics.com. Strangely enough the theory of the King's Gambit did not develop much during this tournament.

However, there was one sideline that was popular like never before (or after). Out of the 90 games 11 featured the rare move 3...f5!?. The idea did not catch on, though. In my database the next two games were played in 1960 and 1991! So what happened in Vienna? Was the move refuted at this tournament?

The answer is affirmative, according to theory. Not only did Black score only 3½ points from these 11 games, in the game Schlechter-Teichmann 4.e5 led to a convincing win for White. This game is quoted in all theory books (or, well, the three I could find which mention 3...f5) as the refutation of 3...f5. However, the game has not been analysed very carefully. If we look at the game from a modern perspective, we will see that things are not so clear, and that 3...f5 is much better than theory gives it credit for.

□ **Carl Schlechter**
■ **Richard Teichmann**
Vienna 1903

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 f5 4.e5 g5

This is critical in my opinion. An old analysis by Alapin runs 4...d6 5.♕e2 dxe5 6.♘xe5 ♕e7 7.d4 g5? 8.♕h5+ ♔d8 9.♕xg5!. Black has several improvements, but I don't think any of them suffices for equality. After 4...d5 White faces a pleasant choice between:

– 5.h4!? ♗e7 6.d4 ♘h6 7.♗xf4 ♘g4 8.♘c3 as in Gunsberg-Swiderski, Vienna 1903, and

– 5.d4 g5 6.h4 g4 7.♘g1 f3 8.♗g5 fxg2 9.♗xg2 ♗e7 10.♘c3! ♗e6 11.♘ge2 (analysis Kortchnoi/Zak). In both cases with advantage for White. The text move forces White to sacrifice a piece.

5.d4

In Anderssen-S.Mieses, Breslau 1867, 5.♗c4 g4 6.♘c3 was played. After 6...gxf3 7.♕xf3 ♕h4+ 8.♔f1 ♕g4 9.♕d5 ♘e7 10.♕f7+ ♔d8 11.d4 f3 the uncle of Jacques Mieses was winning, although Anderssen managed to trick him, and steal the point.

5...g4 6.♗xf4 gxf3 7.♕xf3

From a materialistic point of view, Black is a piece for a centre pawn up. However, White has an edge in development, and Black's king doesn't feel safe with the pawn on f5. White certainly has compensation for his material deficit. But is it enough?

7...♕h4+

This is a natural move to prevent White's threat of 8.♕h5. However, it is definitely not the only move. Thus, 7...♕e7 8.♗c4 ♕b4+ 9.♘d2 ♕b6 10.0-0-0 ♘e7 is an option. Likewise, 7...♘e7 8.♗g5 h5 9.♘c3 ♘bc6 10.0-0-0 d5 is also a good try. Even 7...h5 could be playable. Losing, though, is 7...♘h6? 8.♕h5+ ♘f7 9.♗c4 ♕e7 10.♗g5.

8.g3 ♕g4 9.♕e3

From this square the queen defends the d-pawn and prevents d6 or d5 (for now at least). After 9.♕f2 d5 or 9.♕b3 ♘c6 Black would be very happy.

9...♘c6

The main alternative is 9...♘e7. After 10.♘c3 play might continue:

– 10...♗g7 11.d5 0-0 12.♘b5 ♘a6 13.♗e2 ♕g6 14.♗c4 ♔h8 15.d6 ♘c6 16.0-0-0 ♖c8 when White still has compensation, but nothing concrete.

– 10...♘a6 11.♗e2 ♕g6 12.0-0-0 c6 – typical computer moves, I know – planning to bring a knight to d5, while 13.g4 fxg4 14.♖hg1 ♘b4 is the tactical justification.

– 10...♘bc6 11.♗e2 ♕g8!? (of course 11...♕g6 is possible here also) 12.♗h5+ ♔d8 13.0-0-0 ♘d5 (13...♘b4 is also possible) 14.♘xd5 ♕xd5 15.♔b1 ♗e7 16.♗f3 ♕c4 17.♗e2 ♕a4 with 18...d5 or 18...♘b4 to follow.

10.♗e2 ♕g6 11.♘c3 ♗b4

Teichmann's move, after 11...♘ge7 12.0-0-0 ♘b4 White can try:

– 13.♕f3 c6 14.♗c4 b6 15.a3 ♗a6 16.♗b3 ♘bd5 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♗xd5 ♘xd5 19.♕xd5 ♕c6 and Black can start the technical phase.

– 13.♗f3 c6 14.♕e2 ♕e6 15.♔b1 ♗g7 16.g4 d5 and I don't see how White can prevent Black from consolidating his material advantage.

– 13.d5 c6 14.d6 (14.dxc6 dxc6 15.♖d6 ♗e6 leads to nothing) ♘ed5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♖xd5 cxd5 17.♗f3 is the best try for White. With pawn d5 a goner, it's a rook against two pawns, but Black can hardly develop his queenside. He can exchange another piece with 17...h5 and 18...♗h6. Still, I think White has enough compensation (maybe even more).

12.d5 ♘d8 13.0-0-0

White is now threatening to win with 14.♘b5 ♗a5 15.e6.

13...a6?

Likewise, 13...♗a5 14.♘b5 a6 15.e6 dxe6 16.♘xc7+ ♗xc7 17.♗xc7 gives White good chances. Stronger is 13...c6, since 14.g4 fxg4 15.♘e4 cxd5 16.♖xd5 ♘e6 looks solid.

14.g4 ♘e7?

Two mistakes in a row is too much in such a volatile position. White has good compensation when Black takes the pawn. For example, 14...fxg4 15.♘e4 h5 16.h3 ♘f7 17.hxg4 h4 18.g5. However, after the text White just wins the piece back.

15.d6 ♘e6 After 15...♘ec6 16.gxf5 ♕xf5 17.♘d5 0-0 18.♗h6 Black has no good defence. **16.dxe7 ♗c5** 16...♗xc3 17.bxc3 fxg4 18.♗h6 is also good for White. **17.♕g3 ♗xe7 18.gxf5 ♕xf5 19.♗e3** Since White has the same advantages as before, without being behind in material, he is winning. **19...♗g5 20.♘d5 ♗xe3+ 21.♕xe3 ♔d8 22.♖hg1 ♕f8 23.♖df1 ♕c5 24.♕f3 ♖f8 25.♖g8** **1-0**

□ **Georg Marco**
■ **Rudolf Swiderski**
Vienna 1903

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 f5 4.exf5

This was the most common move in Vienna, played in 7 from the 11 games. Two games featured 4.d3, but this move hardly bothers Black. Thus, in Pillsbury-Teichmann, after 4...d5 5.exd5 ♘f6 6.♗xf4 ♘xd5 7.♗d2 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♗c5 9.♘xd5 ♕xd5 10.c3 0-0 Black had a comfortable position.

Even worse is 4.♘c3, after 4...fxe4 5.♘xe4 d5 Black is simply a pawn up.

4...d5 5.d4 ♗xf5

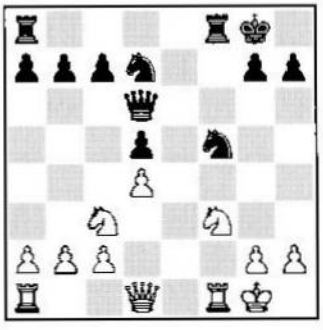
A good alternative is Teichmann's 5...♗d6. In Mieses-Teichmann White played 6.c4,

and after 6...♗xf5 7.cxd5 ♘f6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘bd7 10.0-0 h6 11.♕b3 ♘b6 12.♘e5 g5 Black was slightly better. Marco-Teichmann saw 6.♗d3 ♕f6 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♘ge7 9.♘b5 0-0 10.♘xd6 ♕xd6 11.♘g5 ♗xf5 12.♗xf4 ♕g6 with equal chances.

6.♗xf4 ♗d6 7.♗xd6

Here 7.♘e5 is more ambitious, but after 7...♘f6 8.c4 0-0 9.♘c3 ♘c6 Black has enough counterplay.

7...♕xd6 8.♘c3 ♘e7 9.♗d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♗xf5 ♘xf5



The position is equal.

12.♕d3 ♖f6 13.♖ae1 ♖af8 14.♘d1 c6 15.c3 ♕c7 16.♘f2 ♕f4 17.♘h3 ♕g4 18.♘f2 ♕f4 19.♘h3 ♕g4 20.♘f2 ♕f4

There is still some play left in the position – possible is 21.♘e5 for example – but both players were happy with a draw.

Theory is right that 4.e5 is the critical move against 3...f5, since 4.exf5 gives Black few problems. However, the move forces White to make an unclear piece sacrifice. The resulting position is difficult to evaluate, since there are a lot of possibilities for both sides. However, according to my analysis, Black has good chances for a successful defence. In 1903, we saw the rise and fall of 3...f5. Will 2006 feature the rise again? Who knows!

CHAPTER 10

Jeroen Bosch

Move-order Your Sicilian Opponent

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5!?

No one likes to be 'move-ordered' out of his repertoire. This SOS aims to force Sicilian players into playing the French Defence. Interested? Check out the following nameless variation.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3

This is a good move order weapon against Sicilian players who do not meet 2.c3 with 2...♘f6.

3...d5

Here 3...♘f6 4.e5 ♘d5 is a regular Alapin Sicilian.

4.e5

With 4.exd5 play transposes to a normal Alapin line, whereas with the text White aims to play the French Advance Variation.

4...d4

The only way out. Here 4...♘c6 5.d4 is the Advance Variation and the main idea of White's move order. No Sicilian player likes to be tricked into the French. However, for those who want something trickier, let me point out that no less a player than Ljubojevic has played 5.♘a3!? here: 5...♗d7 6.♘c2 f6 7.d4 fxe5 8.dxe5 ♕c7 9.♗f4 ♘ge7 10.♘e3 ♘g6 11.♗g3 0-0-0 12.♘g5 (this looks strong, but Ribli has prepared an exchange sacrifice) 12...♕b6 13.♘f7 ♕xb2 14.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 15.♖xc1 c4 16.h4 ♗a3 17.♖b1 ♖hf8 18.♘xd8 ♖xd8, and Black had sufficient compensation in Ljubojevic-Ribli, Belfort 1988. In my opin-

ion, Black should meet 5.♘a3!? with 5...d4. The position after 4...d4 actually occurs quite regularly. A popular choice now is 5.♗d3. My recommendation is:

5.cxd4 cxd4 6.♗b5+

Now Black's main reply is 6...♗d7. However, let us first investigate the sideline 6...♘c6.

The sideline

6...♘c6

Less popular, possibly because many players are afraid to weaken their structure in view of the double attack that follows.

7.♗xc6+ bxc6 8.♕a4

The critical position. White seems to be a lot better, but things are by no means so clear. White should especially watch out for winning the weak black pawns too soon, as he may be stuck with his king in the centre and fall under the spell of a powerful black bishop pair.

8...♕b6

A tricky alternative is 8...♗c5.

White does not win a piece because of 9.♕xc6+ ♗d7 10.♕xc5? ♖c8 Niederost-Gheorghiu, Zurich 1991. Stronger is 10.♕e4 ♖c8 11.0-0 ♗c6 Mingo Fernandez-Vehi Bach, Barbera 1995, but Black still has the better chances.

So after 8...♗c5 White should either play the quiet 9.d3 ♕d5 10.♘bd2 ♗d7 11.♘e4 ♗b6 12.♘d6+ ♔e7 13.♘c4± Barlocco-Gheorghiu, Ticino 1990, or the tricky 9.♘c3!? dxc3 10.♕xc6+ ♗d7 11.♕xc5, when the game Mingo Fernandez-Castaner Halster, Sant Boi 2000, went 11...♖c8 12.♕d4 (12.♕xa7) 12...c2 13.0-0 ♘e7 14.b3 0-0 15.♗a3 ♘f5 16.♕f4 ♕c7, and now, 17.♗xf8 c1♕ 18.♖axc1 ♕xc1 19.♗b4 would have been best, when Black does not have enough for his two-pawn deficit.

9.d3

White should not take on d4, e.g. 9.♘xd4? ♗c5 10.♕xc6+ ♕xc6 11.♘xc6 a5. Equally bad is the greedy 9.♕xd4? ♗c5 10.♕h4 ♘c7 Alfaro-Manoukyan, Buenos Aires 1998, again with excellent compensation. After 9.0-0?! ♗a6 Black is fine as well.

These are playable options:

– 9.b3!? ♗a6 10.♗a3 ♘e7 11.♕xd4 ♘d5 12.♗xf8 ♔xf8 13.♕xb6 axb6 14.d4 ♘f4 15.♔d2 c5 16.♘c3 ♘xg2 17.♖hg1 ♘f4 18.♘a4, and White was slightly better in Kharlov-Pira, Paris 1991.

– 9.♘a3 ♗d7 10.♘c4 ♕c7 11.0-0 c5 12.♕c2 ♘h6 13.♘g5 ♘f5 14.♘e4 h5 15.d3 ♗c7 16.b3 a5 17.♗a3± ♖c8 18.f4 f6 19.♕e2 ♔f7 20.♖ac1 a4? 21.♗xc5! and White won in Vusatiuk-Nogin, Kiev 2000.

9...♗a6 10.♘xd4!? ♗c5 10...♗xd3 11.♗e3 **11.♗e3 ♘e7** 11...♗xd3 12.♘c3 ♘e7 13.♖d1± **12.0-0 0-0 13.♘xc6! ♘xc6 14.♗xc5 ♕xc5 15.♕xa6** White is two pawns up, which does not mean all that much, as they are weak and he has a badly developed queenside. Still, Black needs some time to regain the pawns. **15...♖ab8** Preferable was 15...♘xe5 16.♘c3, with a tiny plus. **16.♘d2! ♘xe5** 16...♖xb2 17.♘c4!±, but not 17.♖ac1 ♕xe5 18.♘c4 ♕b5!. **17.♘b3 ♕c2 18.d4 ♘g6 19.♖fc1 ♕e4** 19...♕xb2? 20.♖ab1 traps the queen, when 20...♖xb3 21.axb3 ♕xd4 22.♖d1 should win. **20.♕c6! ♕g4**

21.h3 ♕f4 22.♖c3! a5 23.♖ac1± h5?! 24.♖f3 ♕h6 25.♖c5 ♘h4 26.♖g3 ♕h7 27.♔h2 ♘f5 28.♖f3 ♘h4 29.♖fc3+– ♕h6 30.♕e4 ♘f5 31.♖xa5 ♖b4 32.♖a8 1-0 Braga-Zichichi, Italian Championship, Chianciano 1988.

The main line

6...♗d7

This is the main reply, when White has a choice between two radically different approaches.

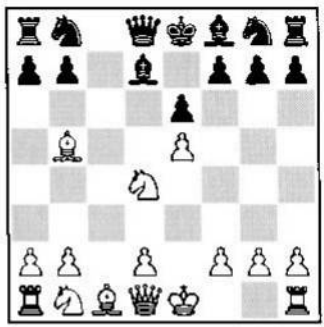
A) 7.♘xd4
B) 7.♗xd7+

Line A is overtly tactical and may be a good practical choice against an unprepared opponent. Line B is strategically sound and objectively stronger.

Variation A

7.♘xd4

A risky move, but it contains a lot of pitfalls and can be very unpleasant to meet in practice.



A1) 7...♕g5
A2) 7...♗xb5

Variation A1

7...♕g5

The most enterprising answer. With this double attack Black forces his way into White's backyard. However, the intrepid queen won't like it so much when the trap snaps shut.

8.♘f3 ♕xg2 9.♖g1 ♕h3

Here 9...♕xg1+ gives some positional compensation for the queen. However, material counts for something, too, as Kharlov-Tunik, Cheliabinsk 1991, demonstrates: 10.♘xg1 ♗xb5 11.♘c3 ♗c6 12.♘ge2 ♘e7 13.♘d4 ♘d7 14.♘db5 ♗xb5 15.♘xb5 ♘d5 16.d4 a6 17.♘c3 ♗b4 18.♗d2 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 b5 20.♕g4 g6 21.a4 and White was winning.

10.♘c3 h6

This protects the important g5 square. Instead Mohrlok-Götz, Germany Bundesliga B 1985/86, went: 10...♘c6 11.♖g3 ♕h5 12.♖g5 ♕h6 13.d4 g6 14.♖g1 ♕g7 15.♕e2 0-0-0 16.♗g5± ♖e8 17.♘e4 h6 18.♗d2 f5 19.exf6 ♘xf6, and now, instead of the game continuation 20.♘c5?!, White has the powerful 20.♖c1!, with the idea of 21.♘e5. Unpinning with 20...♔b8 is met by 21.♘xf6 ♕xf6 22.♗xc6 ♗xc6 23.♘e5.

11.d4 ♘e7 12.♗f1 ♕h5 13.♗e2 ♘bc6 14.♘e4

14...♘f5

Practice has also seen 14...♘d5 15.♖g2 (this prepares to castle 'by hand') 15...♗b4+ 16.♔f1 ♕h3 17.♔g1 0-0-0 18.a3 ♗e7

19.♘e1! (Black's queen is still in a lot of trouble) 19...h5 when (instead of 20.♘f3 as in Cuartas-Franzoni, Biel 1981) White could have won on the spot with 20.♖g3!, e.g. 20...♕f5 21.♗d3 h4 (otherwise ♘d6 decides) 22.♖g5.

15.a3

Protecting square b4. The awkward placing of Black's queen still gives White the edge. Black achieved harmonious piece play after 15.♘g3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♕f5 17.♗e3?! (better 17.a3!) 17...♘b4! 18.♖c1 ♗c6 in Ilczuk-Pieniazek, Suwalki 1999.

15...♗e7 16.♘g3! ♘xg3 17.hxg3 White's pawn structure has been restored. He has the better chances. **17...♕f5 18.♗d3 ♕g4 19.♗e3 ♖d8 20.b4 a6 21.♗e2** Again harassing the queen, this is mainly played to prepare the following knight manoeuvre. **21...♕e4 22.♘d2 ♕h7 23.♘b3 ♘b8** To meet 24.♘c5 with 24...♗c6. **24.♗d3! ♕g8** This is a sorry sight. The proud queen has come such a long way, only to be tucked away on Black's kingside! **25.♘a5 b6 26.♘c4 b5 27.♘a5 ♘c6 28.♘b3 h5 29.♕f3 h4** This futile advance demonstrates Black's helplessness. **30.♗e4 ♘b8 31.♘c5 hxg3 32.fxg3 ♖c8 33.d5 exd5 34.♗xd5 ♗c6 35.0-0-0 ♖h2 36.♖gf1 ♗xd5 37.♕xd5 ♖c6 38.♖h1 ♕h7?? 39.♖xh2 ♕xh2 40.♖h1 1-0** Makarichev-A.Sokolov, Moscow 1981.

Here Black resigned, as 40...♕xg3 41.♖h8+ ♗f8 42.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 43.♕d8+ mates.

Variation A2

7...♗xb5 8.♘xb5 ♘c6

After 8...a6 9.♘5c3 ♕d4 White can play 10.♕a4+ ♕xa4 (10...♘c6!?) 11.♘xa4 ♘c6 12.f4 b5 13.♘ac3 ♘b4 14.♔d1 and in Tindall-Laxman, Jaipur 1979, White was successful with his Houdini-like act.

9.0-0 a6 10.♘5c3

A21) 10...♕d4

A22) 10...♘ge7

Variation A21

10...♕d4

The aim is twofold. Black attacks e5 once again (in hopes of taking it eventually), but in the meantime White will find it difficult to finish his development in a natural way.

11.♘e2!?

Forcing Black to take on e5, when an interesting position arises. With material equality restored, White has the inferior pawn structure (an isolated d-pawn). However, his slight lead in development – often combined with d4-d5 – can come in useful.

The alternative is 11.♖e1. Putting the rook on the e-file is useful in case Black takes the e-pawn. Moreover, White aims to chase the queen away from the annoying d4 square.

– 11...♖d8 12.♖e4 ♕d3 13.♖e3 ♕d4 14.b3 (playing for more – still this possible repetition may put a lot of black players off 10...♕d4) 14...♗c5 15.♗b2 ♕h4 16.g3 ♕h6 17.♖e1 (White is ready to consolidate with 18.♘e4, so Black acts:) 17...♗xf2+! 18.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 19.♔f1 ♕h1+ 20.♔f2 ♕h2+ 21.♔f1 ♕h3+! 22.♔f2, and, after a few more checks, Black settled for a perpetual. Levi-Chua, Penang 1991. Superior would have been the winning 22...♘h6!.

– 11...♘ge7 12.♖e4 ♕d3 13.♖e3 ♕d7 (13...♕d4 14.♘e2 ♕d7 15.♘bc3±) 14.b3 ♘g6 15.♗a3 ♗xa3 (15...♘gxe5!? 16.♗xf8 ♔xf8 is OK for Black) 16.♘xa3 0-0 17.♘c4. Now White is slightly better, as Black has problems recovering the pawn. Yudasin-Adamski, Lvov 1983.

11...♕xe5 12.d4

12...♕h5

Controlling the fifth rank (square d5) and more or less pinning the e2 knight. Moreover, a subsequent ...♗d6 will gain a tempo. But Black has also tried to keep his queen closer to home:

– 12...♕d6 13.♘bc3 ♘f6 14.♗f4 ♕d7 15.♖e1 ♗e7, and now, instead of 16.♕d2?! (Matkowski-Symbor, Warsaw 1987), White should kill all play with 16.♗g5 0-0 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.d5 or go 16.♘a4 ♘d5 17.♘c5 ♗xc5 18.dxc5.

– 12...♕c7 13.d5!? exd5 14.♘bc3 ♘f6 15.♗g5 0-0-0 (15...♗e7 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘xd5 ♕d8 18.♕b3 0-0=) 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♘xd5 ♕e5 equal, Penzold-Stanke, Germany Bundesliga B 1998/99.

13.♘bc3 ♘f6

The natural 13...♗d6 14.h3 ♘f6 15.♕b3 b5 16.♖d1 0-0, Rocha-Savas, Mamaia 1991, led to an easy game for Black. White should play 14.♗f4!?.

14.♕b3!

This underlines the fact that her majesty is away from home (12...♕h5).

14...b5?! 15.♘g3! ♕h4

16.♘xb5! Ouch! **16...axb5 17.♕xb5 ♖c8** Now White repeats moves once before hitting on the winning idea. **18.♕b7 ♘e7 19.♕b5+ ♘c6 20.♗g5! ♕xd4 21.♗xf6** 21.♖ac1! ♕d5 22.♕a6 ♕d7 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♖fd1 wins. **21...gxf6 22.♖ac1 ♕b4?** 22...♕e5! **23.♕a6 ♔d7 24.♖fd1+ ♗d6 25.♖c4 ♕b8 26.♘e4**+– Hassan-Surjadnji, Cairo 1998.

Variation A22

10...♘ge7

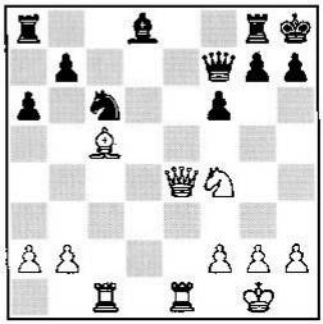
This is Black's strongest line and White's main problem in the 7.♘d4 variation. Not 10...♘xe5?! 11.d4 ♘c6 12.d5, however, with a pleasant initiative for White.

11.♘a3

White makes use of the fact that the a3-f8 diagonal is blocked (...♗a3 would be awkward). After 11.♖e1 ♘g6 White cannot keep the e-pawn. He must develop quickly, hoping to gain some initiative after Black takes e5. 12.b3 ♗e7 13.♘a3 0-0 14.♗b2 ♘gxe5 15.d4 ♘g6 16.d5?! (this break is what White had been counting on. However, Gheorghiu's reply shatters his dreams) 16...♘b4! 17.♕d4 (17.dxe6 ♘d3) 17...a5! 18.♖ad1 ♗f6 19.♕d2 cxd5 and Black was clearly better in Kharlov-Gheorghiu, Bern 1992.

11...♘f5!

The e-pawn won't run away. After 11...♘xe5 12.d4 White is better because of his lead in development. Here's a model achievement by White: 12...♘5c6 13.♘c2 ♘d5 14.♘e3 ♘xe3 15.♗xe3 ♗c7 16.d5! exd5 17.♘xd5 0-0 18.♗b6 (despite the exchanges White clearly has the better chances. His minor pieces are actively placed and Black lacks a good square for his queen) 18...♕c8 19.♖c1 (threatening to take on c6) 19...♗d8 20.♖e1 (keeping the pressure) 20...♔h8 21.♗c5 ♖g8 22.♕f3 f6 23.♕e4 ♕d7 24.♘f4 ♕f7



25.♘g6+! (very nice!) 25...♕xg6 26.♕xg6 hxg6 27.♖e3 ♖f8 28.♗xf8 with a decisive advantage in Ekström-Illijin, Zurich 1995.

12.♘c2 ♗c5! 13.♘e4?! White should try 13.♘e3 for equality. **13...♗d4 14.♘d6+ ♘xd6 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.exd6 ♕xd6** Black has won the pawn under favourable circumstances and was slightly better in Torre-Hübner, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

Variation B

7.♗xd7+

This is a much safer line. Let us examine two model games: Rozentalis-T.Horvath and Zhao-Kulashko.

7...♕xd7 8.d3 ♘c6 9.0-0

An interesting position has arisen. Both sides have grabbed some space (pawn e5 versus pawn d4), both sides may use a central square as their anchor point (e4 versus d5). Exchanging the light-squared bishops favours no one in particular.

9...♘ge7 10.♖e1!

A simple enough move, but clearly the best in this position. There are several games in which White develops the bishops to f4 in order to cover e5. This plan has a serious drawback. The bishop will get stuck on g3 and function as a mere bystander. Just as in the Ruy Lopez it is not so clear at this stage how to develop the bishop, which is why it is best left alone for the moment. The move 10.♖e1 is more than just a defensive move (protecting e5). As with all prophylactic moves, it has positive aspects as well. The rook will go to e4, from which square it will attack d4 and work along the fourth rank.

10...♘g6

To put pressure on White's advanced pawn Black develops the knight to g6.

11.♖e4

Our model games diverge here. Note that Black's main problem is his king: on the queenside things are a little airy, on the kingside, however, White is ready to attack with h2-h4-h5.

● Rozentalis-T.Horvath, Germany Bundesliga 1995/96: **11...♗c5** Protecting d4

and preparing the manoeuvre ♗b6-c7, attacking White's advanced pawn. **12.♕e2** Überdeckung and a useful waiting move. **12...♗b6?!** I don't like this move for Black, even though it is part of a logical plan. White now gets a free hand to play ♘a3-c4. Still, it is not so easy to suggest an alternative. If Black castles (to either side) White will respond with 13.h4, after which he is a little better. **13.♘a3 ♕d5** 13...♗c7 14.♘b5!. **14.♘c4 ♗c7 15.a4** Fixing the knight on the excellent square c4. **15...0-0** This invites White's next move. **16.h4! f5** Black must act, as h5-h6 was being threatened. Alternatively, Black could play 16...h6±. **17.exf6 gxf6** 17...♖xf6 18.♗g5 ♘f4 19.♗xf4 ♗xf4 20.♖e1 ♖e8 21.g3 ♗h6 (21...♗c7 22.♘g5±) 22.♘h2±. **18.♗h6 ♖fe8 19.♖e1 ♖e7?** Like it or not, 19...e5 had to be tried. **20.♖xe6 ♖xe6 21.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 22.♖xe6 ♔f7 23.♖e1** White is a sound pawn up. Rozentalis is up to the technical job. **23...♖d8 24.♗d2 ♖d5 25.g3 ♗d6 26.h5 ♘f8 27.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 28.b4 ♘d7 29.♖c1 ♘ce5 30.♘xe5+ ♘xe5 31.♖c7+ ♖d7 32.♖xd7+ ♘xd7 33.♔f1** Rozentalis has transposed into a bishop versus knight ending with pawns on both sides. **33...f5 34.♗f4 ♔e6 35.♔e2 ♘b6 36.a5 ♘d5 37.♗b8 ♘xb4** 37...a6 38.♗a7 ♘xb4 39.♗xd4 winning. **38.♗xa7 ♔d5 39.♗b6 ♔e5 40.f3 ♘c6 41.♔d2 ♔f6 42.♔c2 ♔g5 43.♔b3 f4** 43...♔xh5 44.♗c7, and his majesty will go for a stroll: ♔c4-b5-b6. **44.g4 ♔h4 45.♗c7 ♔g3 46.g5 ♘e7 47.♔c4 ♔xf3 48.♔c5!? ♔g4 49.♗xf4! ♔xf4 50.♔b6** And now it is clear why they say that the rook pawn is the knight's worst enemy in the ending. **50...♔e3 51.♔xb7 ♔xd3 52.a6 ♔c2 53.a7 d3 54.a8♕ d2 55.♕a4+ ♔c1 56.♕c4+ ♔b2 57.♕d3 ♔c1 58.♕c3+ ♔d1 59.♕c5 1-0**

● Zhao-Kulashko, Gold Coast 1999:
11...♕d5 12.♕e2 0-0-0 At least Black has made up his mind where to tuck away his king. Funnily enough, White reacts on the other flank. **13.h4! ♗c5 14.h5 ♘f8 15.h6** Fracturing Black's pawn structure to kill his counterplay on the kingside. **15...gxh6 16.♗f4!** Not bothering to take back a fairly worthless pawn. **16...♘g6 17.♗g3 ♖d7 18.♘bd2 h5 19.♖c1 ♔b8 20.a3 ♖g8 21.♘c4 ♗e7 22.♔h1**

Both sides are preparing their attacks with great care. Black can only open files by means of h4-h3. White will play b4 and take it from there. **22...h4 23.♗h2 ♖c8 24.b4 h3 25.gxh3 b6 26.♗g3!** Demonstrating that he has all the time in the world, Zhao gets his king off the h1-a8 diagonal. **26...♔b7 27.♔h2 a6 28.♘fd2 ♘a7** Preparing ♘b5-c3, but Zhao will cleverly prevent this. **29.f4 ♖g8** 29...♘b5? 30.♘xb6! and wins. **30.♘f3 ♘b5 31.♕f2** Again preventing 31...♘c3. **31...f5 32.exf6 ♗xf6 33.a4 ♘d6** 33...♘c3? 34.♖xc3 dxc3 35.♕xb6+ ♔a8 36.♕xa6+ ♔b8 37.f5++–. **34.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 35.a5 b5** 35...♘e7! 36.axb6 ♘f5 37.♕c2. **36.♖c5+– ♕b3 37.f5 exf5 38.♖xf5 ♖c6 39.♘xd4 ♗xd4 40.♖f7+ ♔a8 41.♖xd4 ♘e5** Or 41...♖c2 42.♖d8+ ♖xd8 43.♖a7+ mate. **42.♖d8+ 1-0**

CHAPTER 11

Dorian Rogozenko

An Indian SOS, Part I

A knight on the edge – 7...♘h6

In the third millennium chess is different from what it used to be. The existing databases contain several millions of games and their number is growing rapidly every day. The sheer volume of information is immense, often making our memory unable to deal with it. Unfortunately the study of the opening phase requires a tremendous effort, and usually there is no time at all left for any kind of other useful preparation (like endgames, tactics etc.). In order to achieve good positions in the opening one must work a lot and keep one's repertoire up-to-date by following all new developments in the chess theory. Is this time-consuming and difficult work on openings the only way to build a solid opening repertoire? Not really! In the present chapter I would like to present a relatively rare system for Black (it is practically not analysed at all in ECO), which could suit many players and serve them as a long-term weapon against 1.d4. Its main advantages are:

1. it's a relatively simple system to learn and play.
2. it's rare and one doesn't need to update one's repertoire all the time, thus being able to concentrate on other useful work.
3. many white players are not prepared for this system and therefore it often comes as a surprise for them.
4. in spite of its appearance, the presented

system is quite solid and deep. Besides its surprise element, this system is objectively quite OK for Black. This means that even if your opponent is expecting you to play it, it will be very difficult for him to find a sensible advantage against it.

5. the system is perfect for ambitious players – usually the resulting positions are strategically complicated and that's why it is perfect to play for a win with it.

The drawback of the examined system is that White can transpose into the Pirc Defence. However, first of all not many 1.d4 players are ready to play the Pirc Defence and what's more important, even if White transposes to Pirc we'll see that with the chosen move order Black can reduce White's options considerably.

1.d4 g6

There are a quite lot of possible move orders to reach our desired position (the diagram after 7...♘h6). Everyone must figure out for himself which move order to choose. I will try to explain the advantages and drawbacks of the main alternatives.

If Black is not afraid of the classical Pirc Defence, then starting with 1...d6 has one certain advantage: many white players will play 2.♘f3 instead of 2.c4, in order to avoid the system 2.c4 c5. By forcing White to play a quick ♘g1-f3 Black avoids several other possible systems from White (such as Sämisch set-ups, or those with f2-f4).

2.c4

As mentioned above, the main drawback of the presented system is that it allows White to transpose into the Pirc Defence. However, Black can have something special in mind after 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♘c3. The most dangerous set-ups against the Pirc Defence are those where White keeps the knight on g1 for a while. Of course White can play 3.♘f3, when Black has little better than transposing into the Classical Pirc Defence with 3...d6 and then 4...♘f6. Another possible move is 3.c3, but all these variations are not the most dangerous systems against the Pirc.

By playing 3.♘c3 White wants to transpose into a Pirc where he may opt for the Austrian Attack, or for systems with ♗e3 and ♕d2. In this case, however, you can surprise your opponent with 3...d5!?. This SOS recommendation was discussed in volume one of the SOS series (SOS 1, Chapter 13, p.106).

2...♗g7 3.♘c3

3.e4 d6 usually transposes to similar variations after 4.♘c3 or 4.♘f3. The move 4.f4 is not dangerous. Without the knight on f6 Black has many additional possibilities to play for a quick attack on the d4-pawn. The most attractive are 4...♘c6, and 4...c6 followed by ...♕b6. Black also achieves good play with 4...♘d7 followed by 5...e5.

3...d6 4.e4

With 4.♘f3 ♘d7 5.g3 (5.c4 e5 is the main line) White is willing to transpose into a g3-King's Indian. The position of the knight on g8 allows Black to choose an independent set-up in that case as well, see the next SOS chapter.

4...e5

If for some reasons Black doesn't want to allow White the possibility to trade queens, then 4...♘d7 is a reasonable alternative, when the most popular continuation is 5.♘f3

e5 6.♗e2 c6 7.0-0, which transposes to the main line. Instead of 5.♘f3 White has other options too:

5.f4 e5 6.fxe5 (Black has good play after either 6.♘f3 exd4 7.♘xd4 ♘gf6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 c6, or 6.♗e3 exd4 7.♗xd4 ♘gf6 for instance: 8.♕d3 0-0 9.0-0-0 a6 10.g3 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♕xb5 ♖b8 13.♕d3 ♗b7 with strong compensation for the pawn, Fritz2-Kasparov, Cologne blitz 1992) 6...dxe5 7.d5 ♘gf6 (both 7...♕h4+!? 8.g3 ♕d8 and 7...♘h6 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♗e2 f6 lead to double-edged play)

Now:

– 8.♗e2 0-0 9.♘f3 (9.♘h3 c5!? 10.dxc6 bxc6 11.♗e3 ♕e7 12.0-0 ♘c5 13.♘f2 ♘e6∓) 9...♘c5 10.♕c2 ♘fxe4! 11.♘xe4 ♗f5 12.♗d3 ♗xe4 13.♗xe4 f5 and Black is better.

– 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♗g5 c6 10.♘f3 ♕b6 11.♘a4 ♕b4+ 12.♗d2 ♕e7 13.0-0 cxd5 14.cxd5 b5 15.♘c3 ♘c5∓ Danner-Ermenkov, Albena 1983.

– 8.♘f3 0-0

In this complicated position Black has enough resources to use his lead in development and the somewhat weak dark squares in White's camp. The game Hjartarson-Berg, Akureyri 1994 continued 9.♗d3 (for 9.♗e2 see 8.♗e2) 9...c6 10.0-0 ♕b6+ 11.♔h1 ♘g4 12.♕e2 ♘c5 13.♗c2 f5 14.exf5 (14.h3 fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘f6 with initiative) 14...♗xf5 15.♗xf5 gxf5 (even stronger looks 15...♖xf5 16.h3 e4 17.hxg4 exf3 18.gxf3 ♖e5 with compensation) 16.h3 ♘f6 17.♗e3 ♘fe4 18.♘xe4 ♘xe4 19.♗xb6 ♘g3+ 20.♔h2 ♘xe2 21.♗c7 e4 22.♘g5 cxd5 23.♘e6 d4! and Black was soon victorious.

Alternatively, at move 5 White can try different kinds of transpositions into a Sämisch set-up. As usual the position of the knight on g8 leaves Black with additional options. For instance after **5.♗e3** e5 6.♘ge2 (6.d5 h5!? followed by ...♗h6 is good) besides 6...♘gf6 Black can develop the knight on h6 or e7, intending ...f5. One example: 6...♘e7 7.♕d2 0-0 8.f3 f5 9.d5 a6 10.♘c1 fxe4 11.fxe4 ♘f6 12.♗e2 ♘g4 13.♗xg4 ♗xg4 14.♘d3 ♔h8 15.♘f2 ♗d7 16.0-0 ♘g8 17.a4 ♕h4 18.a5 ♗h6 with equality in Bischoff-Reinderman, Venlo 2000.

5.♘f3

This is clearly the main move. Let us first investigate the alternative ways of dealing with the attack on d4:

● **5.♗e3** allows 5...exd4 6.♗xd4 ♘f6 and Black will win a tempo with ...♘c6, which enables him to equalize right away. In the following sharp play his chances are not worse. 7.f3 (7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♖e8 10.♘d2 ♘d7 11.0-0 ♘d4 12.♗d3 ♘c5 13.♘b3 ♘xd3 14.♕xd3 ♘c6 15.♖fd1 ♘e5 16.♕e2 b6= Lputian-Todorcevic, Cannes 1996) 7...0-0 8.♕d2 ♖e8 9.♘ge2 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♘e5 11.♘f4 c6 12.h4 ♕e7 13.0-0-0 ♖d8 14.♔b1 (14.h5 g5 15.♘h3 h6∓) 14...♗e6 15.b3 d5!? 16.♘xe6 ♕xe6 (a pawn sacrifice. Good enough was also 16...fxe6) 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.exd5 ♕d7 19.♗b5 ♕d6 20.♗g5 ♖dc8 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♘e4 ♕b6 23.♗e2 a5 24.d6 a4 25.b4 a3. Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn, Budnikov-Azmaiparashvili, Moscow 1994.

● **5.♘ge2** ♘c6 (the set-up with the knight on d7 is also playable: 5...♘d7 6.♗e3 ♘h6 7.f3 f6 8.♕d2 ♘f7 9.h4 – or 9.0-0-0 c6 with the idea ...a6 and ...b5 – 9...c6 10.h5 a6 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 13.d5 f5 14.b4 ♘f6 15.0-0-0 a5 16.b5 cxb5 17.cxb5 a4 18.a3 ♗d7 Black is better thanks to his safer king, De Santis-Badea, Montecatini Terme 1999) 6.♗e3 (weaker is 6.d5 ♘ce7 7.f3 f5 8.♗e3 ♗h6 with excellent prospects for Black) 6...♘h6 (this is in the spirit of the system. 6...exd4 7.♘xd4 ♘ge7 leads to another set-up, where White's chances are slightly preferable after both 8.h4 and 8.♗e2) 7.f3 f5 Black's chances are by no means worse.

8.d5 ♘e7 9.♕d2 ♘f7 10.c5 (10.g3 c5! 11.♗g2 h5! 12.0-0 h4 13.♖ae1 a6 14.b3 ♗d7∓ Ermenkov-Azmaiparashvili, Elenite 1994) 10...f4 11.♗f2 0-0 (11...g5∞ Stohl-Seirawan, Manila Interzonal 1990) 12.0-0-0 dxc5 13.♗xc5 ♘d6 14.♘g1 a6 15.h4 b6 16.♗a3 b5 17.♘h3 h6 18.♘f2 ♗d7 19.b3 ♘ec8 20.♘d3 a5 21.♗b2 ♘b7 22.♔b1 ♘cd6 23.♕f2 b4 24.♘e2 ♕e7 25.♘c5 a4 and Black is the first one to start the attack, Razuvaev-Todorcevic, Rome 1990.

● **5.d5**. This advance secures White a space advantage, but, on the other hand, closing the centre is a concession, especially here when the knight is still on g8 and Black can go for a quick ...f7-f5. Besides, the knight on g8 helps Black to support the favourable trade of the dark-squared bishops. In my opinion 5.d5 can hardly pretend to fight for an opening advantage. White simply wants to get a complicated middlegame. After 5.d5 Black has several playable options. I would suggest 5...h5!? which represents an interesting way to expand on the kingside. It rules out any g2-g4 ideas and also it makes sense to advance the h-pawn before playing ...♗h6. Last but not least, this is the kind of move that your opponent is probably not expecting. Then 6.♗d3 ♘d7 7.♘f3 (7.♘ge2 h4!) 7...h4 8.h3 (or 8.♗g5 ♗f6 9.♗e3 h3 10.g3 ♘h6) 8...♗h6 offers mutual chances. Besides 5...h5, both 5...f5 6.exf5 gxf5 7.♕h5+ ♔f8, which leads to sharp double-edged positions, and the standard 5...a5 are perfectly playable for Black. In the latter case, after 6.♗d3 ♘a6 7.♘ge2 I would advise 7...♘h6 and then ...0-0 and ...f5, or even ...f6 and ...♘f7.

● **5.dxe5**. This is considered the only reasonable alternative to 5.♘f3, although in my opinion it is inferior. 5...dxe5 (actually 5...♗xe5 is interesting too, and represents an option for those aggressive players who don't want to trade queens. However, I am an adept of 'clean' and objective play and therefore I don't see a reason why to avoid an equal endgame, with plenty of fighting resources) 6.♕xd8+ ♔xd8.

Black is doing fine in this endgame. He has a better pawn structure (viz. the 'hole' on d4) and can be optimistic about the future.

Now after quiet continuations Black will enjoy comfortable equality. Thus, after **7.♘f3** f6 8.♗e3 ♗e6, play may continue:

– 9.♗e2 c6 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♖fd1 ♗h6 12.♗c5 ♔e8 13.♗a3 ♗f8 14.♗xf8 ♔xf8 15.b4 ♔e7 16.c5 ♘h6 17.♘d2 ♘f7 18.♘c4 ♖hc8 19.♖ac1 ♘f8 20.f3 ♗xc4 21.♗xc4 ♘d8 22.♘a4 ♘de6∓ Wang-Azmaiparashvili, Xiapu 2005, or

– 9.♘d2 ♗h6 10.♗xh6 ♘xh6 11.♗e2 c6∓ Alburt-Seirawan, Cambridge Springs 1988.

In both these games Black was slightly better owing to the weakness on d4 in White's pawn formation and in both games Black succeeded to win.

Therefore, the only way to justify White's decision to enter the endgame is **7.f4**. However, this can easily backfire. 7...♘c6 (I was confronted once with 7...♗e6 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.♗e2 h6 10.g3 and soon realized the dangers for White: 10...♘e7 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♗e3 exf4! 13.gxf4 ♗xc3! 14.bxc3 ♘c6 15.♗d3 ♘a5 16.♘d2 f5 17.e5 ♔e7. White is struggling to survive, Rogozenko-Badea, Bucharest 1998) 8.♘f3

Here Black has several good possibilities:

– 8...♘d4 9.♔f2 exf4 10.♗xf4 ♘e6 11.♗d2 ♘f6 12.h3 ♘d7 13.♗d3 ♘e5 14.♗e2 c6 15.♘a4 ♘xf3 16.♗xf3 ♔c7 Black is slightly better, Petursson-Ehlvest, Yerevan ol 1996.

– 8...♗g4 9.♗e2 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘f6 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♗e3 h5!? 13.♖ab1 exf4 14.♗xf4 ♘e5 15.b4 c6 16.b5 ♔c7 17.♘a4 ♘d7 18.♖b3 ♗f8 19.♗e2 f6 20.♗e3 ♘f7 21.♗f2 ♘d6 22.♖fb1 ♘xe4 23.bxc6 bxc6 24.♖b7+ ♔c8. White is in serious trouble, Krush-Nisipeanu, Andorra 2003.

– 8...♗e6 9.♗e3 (or 9.♔f2 ♘f6 10.♗e2 h6 11.h3 ♔c8 12.g3 ♘d7 13.♔g2 exf4 14.gxf4 ♗xc3! 15.bxc3 ♘a5 16.♘d2 c5∓ Agrest-Morozevich, Calvia ol 2004) 9...♘f6 10.h3 ♔c8 11.fxe5 ♘d7 12.♘g5 ♘d8 13.♗e2 ♘xe5 14.♘xe6 ♘xe6 (this is another kind of equal position where the future belongs rather to Black thanks to his better pawn formation) 15.0-0 c6 16.♖ad1 h5! 17.g4 h4! 18.g5 ♖e8 19.c5 ♔c7 (the knights are stronger than bishops. White tried to open the position, but got nowhere and lost) 20.♘d5+ cxd5 21.exd5 ♘f8 22.♗f4 ♖ad8 23.♗h2 ♔c8 24.c6 bxc6 25.dxc6 ♖xd1 26.♗xd1 ♖e7, winning, Bareev-Morozevich, Monaco rapid 2005.

5...♘d7 6.♗e2

Here we reach an important moment. The idea of the whole system is to develop the pieces in the following way: ...♘h6, ...0-0 and then play mainly for ...f5. If necessary, the knight can go to f7 later, where it will control the important squares d6 and g5. Sometimes in order to prepare ...f5 Black

should play first ...f6 and ...♘f7. In the diagram position the problem is that if Black starts with 6...♘h6, then White uses the fact that the rook is still on h1 and plays 7.h4! followed by the inevitable further advance. Then the position after 7...f6 8.h5 ♘f7 9.♗c3 f5 10.g3 favours White. The continuation 6...f6 is not really to my taste, first of all because sometimes Black can do without this move and play ...f5 in one go at a later stage. Secondly, the move I suggest is almost always necessary for Black anyway.

6...c6

Black can hardly do without this move, since in such positions he usually needs to keep square d5 under control. For those who want to avoid the variation 6...c6 7.0-0 ♘h6 8.c5, the continuation 6...f6 may represent a reasonable alternative.

7.0-0

Here **7.h4** makes no sense because of 7...♘gf6 and Black keeps square h5 under control. In case of **7.♗e3** Black can play 7...♘h6, since White must reckon with ...♘g4. Then after 8.h3 (threatening 9.♕d2. 8.h4? ♘g4) Black can allow himself the slow development with 8...f6, since 8.h3 is also a waste of time and can turn out to be a weakness later. Black will finish development and play ...f5 later with good play.

White can try to be smart and make a waiting move like **7.♖b1**, with the idea 7...♘h6 8.h4. However, the move ...c6 is more useful than ♖b1. Black can continue for instance 8...♕e7 9.h5 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘c5 with counterplay in centre. White's activity on the kingside brings him nothing here.

The only more or less reasonable alternative to 7.0-0 is **7.d5**. Then 7...c5 8.0-0 ♘h6 transposes to 7.0-0. Independent role has the move 8.g4!? instead of castling. Due to the fact that the centre is closed, White can allow himself such pawn moves on the side. However, if Black pays attention he is fine: 8...♘df6 9.h3 (9.g5 ♘h5 is good for Black, who, besides ...♘f4, also has the idea ...h6) 9...♘e7 10.♗c3 0-0 11.♘d2 ♘e8 12.♕c2 f5 13.f3 a6 14.a3 ♗d7 15.b4 b6 16.g5 ♗h8 and here a draw was agreed in Nisipeanu-Badea, Bucharest 1998. In fact Black's position is preferable thanks to the manoeuvre ♘e8-g7-h5-f4, after which White will have to play very accurately in order to avoid the opening of the position. Besides 8...♘df6, also deserving of attention is 8...f6 9.h4 ♘h6 10.♘d2 (10.g5 ♘f7 11.♗c3 f5∞) 10...♘f7 11.♘f1 a6 12.♘g3 ♖b8 13.a3 ♗h6 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 0-0 with equal play, Tosic-Varlamov, St Petersburg 1993.

7...♘h6

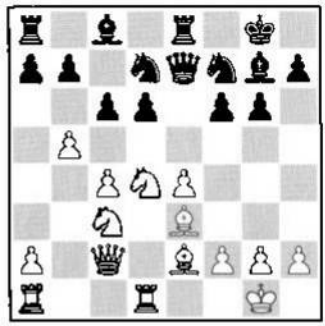
Now that White has castled and the plan with h2-h4-h5 is no longer dangerous, Black can develop the knight to h6. Some players prefer 7...♕e7 or 7...f6 instead, but in my opinion these moves are not Black's main priority and represent a concession: 7...♕e7 defines the queen's position too early, while 7...f6 can be a loss of time, since Black often goes for the immediate ...f5 (or sometimes he doesn't advance the f-pawn at all). The only justification for refraining from 7...♘h6 is the desire to avoid White's quick c4-c5. However, I believe that 7...♘h6 8.c5 offers Black reasonable play. Moreover, as shown by N. Sulava in New In Chess Yearbook 68, after 7...♕c7 White can still go for complications with 8.c5.

This is the position that Black has been aiming for. It can arise via various move orders. Black's idea is to castle short and then, according to circumstances, either prepare the advance ...f5, or start dynamic play with ...e5xd4 followed by ...♘e5, ...♕h4 etc. White's standard plan is to expand on the queenside with 8.♖b1 followed by b2-b4. In my opinion White's only serious possibilities to fight for an advantage are 8.d5 and 8.c5. The latter is best and will be dealt with in the last instance.

Some other moves:

● 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.b4 (after 9.b3 0-0 10.♗a3 ♖e8 the position is equal. Black plans either ...f5, or ...f6, ...♘f7 and ...♗f8) 9...0-0 10.♖b1 ♕c7 11.c5. Here Black has at his disposal two plans, which lead to equal positions. One is ...♖d8, followed by ...♘f8-e6. Another possibility is to play ...f6 followed by ...♘f7 and prepare ...f5 later on.

● 8.♗g5 is of course a poor move, since Black is happy to 'weaken' his position with ...f6. The following game is a good illustration of the resources of Black's position. 8...f6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.b4 ♘f7 11.♕c2 ♕e7 12.♖fd1 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♖e8 14.b5.



White is playing apparently logical – he attacks on the queenside. Now it is very instructive to see how in the game Sharavdorj-Kotronias, Bled ol 2002, Black took over the advantage: 14...c5 15.♘b3 ♘b6! 16.a4 ♗e6! 17.♘d2 ♘e5 18.♕b3 ♕f7! 19.♘d5 f5 20.a5 ♘xd5 21.cxd5 ♗d7 22.f3 f4! 23.♗f2 g5. White has a strategically difficult position: he can do nothing in centre and on the queenside, while Black can slowly prepare the attack on the kingside.

● 8.♗e3 0-0 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♘d2 ♕e7 11.♕c2 f5 12.f3 f4 13.♗f2 g5 14.a3 ♘f7 (good for Black is also 14...♘c5 15.b4 ♘e6 16.c5 ♘d4) 15.b4 h5 in this double-edged position the draw was agreed, Peng-Bosboom Lanchava, Rotterdam 2000.

● 8.♖e1 0-0 9.♗f1 f6 (after 9...f5 Black must reckon with 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♗xh6 ♗xh6 12.exf5; 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘g4 leads to a theoretical variation where the knight comes to g4 from f6. According to theory White has a slight edge there) 10.♖b1 a5 11.a3 ♘f7. Such positions offer chances for both sides. In the following example Black achieved everything he dreamt of: 12.dxe5 (12.b4 axb4 13.axb4 ♖e8!? would have kept the tension) 12...dxe5 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♕e7 15.♕c2 ♔h8 16.♗e3 ♘d8!? (an instructive manoeuvre) 17.♖ed1 ♘e6 18.♕d2 ♖e8 19.c5 f5 20.♕b2 f4 21.♗c1 ♘d4 22.♖d3 g5 and Black was better in the game Tzermiadianos-Cela, Panormo Zonal 1998.

A) 8.♖b1
B) 8.d5
C) 8.c5

Variation A
8.♖b1 0-0 9.b4 exd4!

The best continuation. White started wing actions and Black opens the centre. That's why I feel that Black should try to avoid an early ...f6. Here 9...f6 is a playable move, but in my opinion thanks to his space advantage White has the slightly better prospects. Instead of the text, 9...f5 also deserves attention.

10.♘xd4 ♘e5

In this position Black has good chances to build up an initiative:

● 11.b5 ♕h4!? 12.bxc6 bxc6 13.♖b3 (after 13.f4 Black plays 13...c5!) Now the game Portisch-Meleghegyi, Hungary 1979 continued 13...♗g4 14.f3 ♗e6 15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.♕xd6 ♘hg4! 17.fxg4 ♖xf1+ 18.♗xf1 ♖f8 and in the upcoming complications White was lucky to escape with a draw. However, on move 15 and 16 White should have played f2-f4 with favourable complications. Therefore I think easiest for Black is 13...♖e8 with good play. For instance: 14.f4 ♘d7!? 15.♘xc6 ♘c5 16.♖a3 ♗b7 and Black has great activity for the pawn.

● 11.h3 ♕h4 12.♖b3 (bad is 12.f4? ♗xh3 13.fxe5 ♗xe5 with a powerful attack) 12...g5! (a strong move, which besides preventing f2-f4 also creates ideas with ...g5-g4) 13.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14.♗xf3 g4 15.hxg4 ♘xg4 16.♗xg4 ♗xg4 17.♘e2 (17.f3? ♗e5–+; after 17.♕xd6 both 17...♗e6 and 17...♖fe8 secure an advantage) 17...♖fe8. Black is better, Donner-Ljubojevic, Nice ol 1974.

Variation B

8.d5 c5

The centre is closed and each side carries out his own play: White plays on the queenside, Black tries to organize counterplay on the kingside. As usual in such situations White often starts his play quicker, but Black's counterplay is always very dangerous.

9.♗d2

The direct 9.♘b5 is met by 9...♘b6 10.a3 (not 10.b4 cxb4 11.c5 dxc5 12.d6 0-0∓) 10...a6 11.♘c3 0-0 12.b4 ♘d7 13.♘a4 b6 14.♖b1 f6 (after 14...f5 White has 15.♘g5) 15.♕c2 ♘f7 16.♗d2 ♗h6 17.♖b2 ♔h8 18.♗d3 ♗xd2 19.♘xd2 ♘h6 20.bxc5 bxc5 21.♘b3 f5 22.♕d2 ♕h4 23.f3 fxe4 24.♗xe4 ♘f6 with good counterplay, Shumiakina-Kuzmina, Elista 2003.

9...f6 10.a3

In Schaufelberger-Ljubojevic, Skopje ol 1972, there followed: 10.♖b1 0-0 11.♘e1 f5 – now that White has no ♘g5 Black can play ...f5 – 12.♘d3 ♘b6 13.♘c1 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♗f5∓ 15.f3 ♗xe4 16.fxc4 ♕h4 with a strong initiative on the kingside.

10...0-0 11.b4 ♘f7 12.♕c2 ♗h6 13.♗e1 b6 14.♗d3

This is Rogozenko-Badea, Tusnad 2005. I remember I was happy here with my position – White has prevented ...f5 and apparently Black has no play at all. Well, after my opponent's answer 14...♘b8! I slowly started to realize that my happiness was premature, since Black will put the knight on a6, almost completely neutralizing White's activity on the queenside. Later Black can prepare ...f5. After a long thought I decided

to transfer my bishop to the long diagonal and then go for f2-f4. 15.♘e2 ♗g4 16.♘d2 ♘a6 17.♘b3 ♗d7 18.♗c3 ♗g7! 19.♘d2 ♘h6! 20.h3 ♕e7 21.f4 exf4 22.♘xf4 ♘f7! (the knight repeatedly made only weird moves ♘h6-f7 and now it gets the perfect square e5. Amazing!) 23.♕d1 ♘e5 24.♗c2, and here somewhat prematurely a draw was agreed. Black has at least equal chances. He can either play 24...♕e8 in order to prevent the trade of light-squared bishops, or he can fight for the initiative right away with the active 24...b5.

Variation C

8.c5

This attempt is designed to 'punish' Black for his extravagant set-up.

8...dxc5

Another possibility is to sacrifice a pawn with 8...exd4 9.♗xh6 ♗xh6 10.♕xd4 0-0 11.cxd6 – 11.♕xd6? ♕a5 with advantage for Black – 11...♕b6, after which Black has some compensation thanks to the bishop pair and especially due to the absence of White's dark-squared bishop. However, I believe that 8...dxc5 is stronger.

9.dxe5

White's main trump is the poor position of the knight on h6 and a slight lead in development. On the other hand Black can easily attack White's pawns and once the knight from h6 will be back into play, White will start to feel uncomfortable.

9...♕c7

I like this rare continuation best. Bad is 9...♘g4? 10.e6 fxe6 11.♘g5 and White wins, but 9...0-0 is a playable alternative. Then after 10.h3 ♔h8 White has a large choice:

– 11.♕d6 ♘xe5! 12.♕xc5 ♘xf3+ 13.♗xf3 f5! and Black takes over the initiative.

– 11.♗c4 ♘g8 12.♗xf7?! ♘xe5 (even better was the simple 12...♖xf7 13.e6 ♖f8 14.exd7 ♗xd7∓) 13.♘xe5 ♕xd1 14.♖xd1 ♗xe5 15.♗xg8 ♔xg8 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.f4 ♗d4+ 18.♔h2 ♗e6 with equality, Henley-Minaya, Tunja 1981.

– 11.♗g5 ♕e8 12.♕d6 ♘g8 13.♗e3 ♘xe5 14.♗xc5 ♘xf3+ 15.♗xf3 f6 16.♕d4 (correct was 16.♖ad1 ♗e6 followed by ...♖f7, with complicated play) 16...♖f7 17.♗xa7 f5 Here White is walking on the edge 18.♕e3? (it was time to think about saving the game with 18.e5) 18...f4 19.♕c5 ♘f6 20.♗b6 ♘d7 21.♕b4 ♘e5 22.♖fd1 ♘xf3+ 23.gxf3 ♗xh3 Black is better, Goehler-Bosboom Lanchava, Germany 2003.

– 11.♗f4 ♕e7 12.♕d6 ♖e8 13.♕xe7 ♖xe7 14.♖ad1 ♘g8 15.♗g5 ♖e8 16.♗c4 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♗xf7 ♖f8 19.♗b3 b6 20.♖d2 and a draw was agreed in Vegh-Lau, Budapest 1987. The game could continue 20...♔g7 (the immediate 20...♘f6 is bad in view of 21.♗h6) 21.♖fd1 ♘f6 22.♖d8 ♗a6 with equality.

10.♕d6

After 10.♗f4 ♘g4 11.♕d6 ♕xd6 12.exd6 f6 (Black can also consider the risky 12...b5!? 13.♘d2 ♘f8 14.h3 ♘e6 15.♗g3 ♘h6∞ 16.a4 b4 17.♘d1 f5!? 18.♗c4 f4 19.♗xe6 ♗xe6 20.♗xf4 ♘f7 with compensation for the pawn. However, the more quiet 12...f6 must be better) 13.♗g3 (or 13.♖ad1 b6 14.♗g3 a5 unclear) 13...♘ge5 14.♘d2 ♘f7

(it deserves attention to start with 14...b6, 14...0-0 or even 14...a5 – with the idea to advance the a-pawn) 15.f4 b6 16.♘c4 a5 17.a4 ♗a6 18.♖ad1 0-0 19.b3 ♖fe8 we have a very complex and unclear endgame. The pawn on d6 is blockaded and can later become weak. Black has at his disposal the plan ♘d8-e6-d4. Besides, White must always consider the advance ...b6-b5-b4. For instance after 20.♗f3 b5, or 20.♗g4 f5 21.exf5 ♘h6! Black is already much better. Even after 20.♖fe1 Black can consider 20...b5. For instance: 21.axb5 cxb5 22.♘xa5 b4 23.♘b5 ♖eb8 and White suddenly has problems with his cavalry.

10...♕xd6 11.exd6

In this complicated endgame Black's chances should not be underestimated. The pawn on d6 is well blockaded and can become a target for Black's pieces. There was one single game from this position, where after **11...0-0** 12.a4 ♔h8 13.♖d1 b6 14.♗c4 ♗b7 15.♗g5 f6 16.♗xh6 ♗xh6 17.♗e6 ♖ad8 18.a5 ♖fe8 White decided to repeat moves with 19.♗f7 ♖f8 20.♗e6 (if 20.♗b3 b5 the position would have remained double-edged) 20...♖fe8 21.♗f7 ♖f8, draw, Keene-Gaprindashvili, Dortmund 1978.

However, in my opinion it makes sense for Black to keep the king in the centre and bring his knight into play with **11...f6**. Then after 12.♗f4 ♘f7 some possible variations are:

– 13.♗c4?! ♘de5 14.♘xe5 fxe5 15.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16.♗e3 b6∓

– 13.♖ad1 b6 14.♖fe1 a5!?∞, next Black can expand on the queenside or prepare to castle long.

– 13.♖fd1 b6 14.a4 a5 15.♗g3 (15.♘d2 ♘de5∞) 15...♗a6 16.♗xa6 ♖xa6 17.♔f1 ♔d8!? followed by ♖e8, with approximate equality. I think that it is rather Black who has several possibilities to improve his position.

In conclusion the development of the knight on h6 instead of f6 is an interesting set-up that will very likely surprise your opponent. I also believe that for some players the discussed system can serve as a main weapon against 1.d4.

CHAPTER 12

Dorian Rogozenko

An Indian SOS, Part II

Bringing the knight to c6 – 6...♘e7

What to do with Black when after 1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘f3 ♘d7 White plays 5.g3, aiming for the very solid fianchetto set-up? Should Black enter the King's Indian Defence? Of course that represents a possibility, but there is a more interesting set-up, which in most cases will make white players feel more uncomfortable than when playing against the KID. After

1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘f3 ♘d7 5.g3 e5 6.♗g2

Black can play

6...♘e7!?

The Georgian GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili is the biggest expert of this system. Instead of to f6, the knight goes to c6. From this square the knight will, together with the g7-bishop, exert pressure on d4. In my opinion this is objectively not worse than placing the knight on f6, even if it is by far less popular. An interesting fact is that also according to ECO White has no advantage against this system.

7.0-0 0-0 8.e4

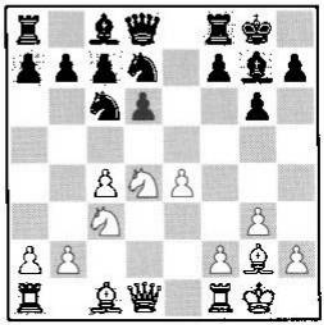
The most ambitious continuation.

Instead, 8.dxe5 would only simplify the position and does not set even slightest problems for Black. Play is equal after 8...dxe5 9.♕c2 c6 10.♖d1 ♕c7.

8.e3 has some logic – anticipating Black's pressure on d4 White takes prophylactic measures. On the other hand, such a modest

move can hardly pretend to fight for an opening advantage. Black has concrete ways to neutralize this plan starting with 8...exd4:
– 9.exd4 ♘b6 (9...d5 also equalizes) 10.b3 c5 11.♗b2 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5= Huber-Yoos, Edmonton 2004.
– 9.♘xd4 ♘b6 10.b3 c5 11.♘de2 d5 – Black efficiently uses his knights to break White's centre – 12.♗a3 dxc4 13.♕xd8 (13.♗xc5 ♕c7=) 13...♖xd8 14.♗xc5 ♘c6 equal, but as usual equality does not mean a draw. In the game Basin-Azmaiparashvili, Minsk 1985, White failed to achieve it.

8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6



Black's main idea is to exert pressure on the dark squares. Unlike in KID-fianchetto variations, in the present system White cannot keep the knight on d4 and must make a concession.

10.♘de2

This retreat is most popular in practice. White strengthens the other knight on c3 and will protect pawn c4 by means of b2-b3. Black also has his trumps. Now that the knight left the centre, Black can arrange his pieces on active positions and combine queenside play (the advance of a-pawn) with activity in the centre and on the kingside (advance of f-pawn).
White's other options are:
● 10.♘c2?! ♘de5 11.♘e3 ♘a5 (or 11...♗e6 12.♘cd5 ♘a5 with advantage) 12.♕a4 b6 13.♘cd5 (13.f4 ♗d7 14.♕c2 ♘exc4 15.♘xc4 ♘xc4 16.♘d5 b5∓) 13...c6 14.♘b4 ♗e6 15.♕c2 ♖c8 16.♖d1 ♘axc4 17.♘xc4 ♘xc4. Black is simply a pawn up, Maris-Arnason, Katerini 1993.
● 10.♗e3 This attempt to keep the knight on d4 does not work out well: 10...♘de5 11.b3 (11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.c5 ♘c4 13.♗c1 might be the best solution, even though the question remains whether White will be able to neutralize Black's initiative and keep equality) 11...♘g4 12.♘xc6 ♘xe3! 13.♕d3 bxc6 14.♕xe3 ♖e8 Black is slightly better due to the bishop pair.
● 10.♘xc6 bxc6.

Doubled pawns are not a problem for Black in such a position, he can use the b-file to increase pressure on White's queenside.
In the diagram position White has:
– 11.♗d2 ♘e5 12.b3 c5 (12...♗g4 13.f3 ♗d7 is another reasonable possibility) 13.h3 ♗d7 14.♔h2 ♘c6 15.f4 a5 16.♖c1 ♘d4 17.♘d5 a4 Black has characteristic counterplay on the queenside, Adianto-Azmaiparashvili, Batumi rapid 2001.
– 11.f4 ♗a6 12.♖e1 (12.♕e2? ♘b6∓) 12...♗xc4 13.♕a4 (After 13.e5 dxe5 14.♗xc6 ♗e6! 15.♗xa8 ♕xa8 Black has powerful compensation for the exchange) 13...♗c6 14.♕xc6 ♘c5 15.♕b5 ♖b8 16.♕e2 ♗c8! Black has the initiative, Makarov-Todorcevic, Cetinje 1993.

– 11.♕c2 ♘e5. The weakness of pawn c4 secures Black some initiative, although the position remains about equal:

12.b3 ♕f6 (another possibility is 12...g5!?∞) 13.♗b2 ♘f3+ 14.♔h1 ♗g4 (Again 14...g5!? is the alternative: 15.♘d1 ♘d4 16.♕d3 ♗g4 17.f3 ♗e6 18.♘e3 c5 19.♖ad1 ♕h6 20.f4 gxf4 21.gxf4 ♖ae8∞ Suciu-Marin, Tusnad 2004) 15.♕d3 (15.♘d1 ♘d4 is equal, as is 15.h3 ♘d4 16.♕d3 ♗f3) 15...♘e5 16.♕e3 ♗f3 17.♘a4 ♖fe8 18.♖ae1 ♗xg2+ 19.♔xg2 ♕e6 20.♕c3 ♗f6 21.f4 ♘d7 22.♕d2 ♗xb2 23.♕xb2 f5 with equality in Co.Ionescu-McNab, Thessaloniki ol 1988.

12.c5 ♖b8 (or 12...g5!? 13.h3 ♕f6 14.f4 gxf4 15.gxf4 ♘g6 16.e5 dxe5 17.f5 ♘f4 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.♖xf4 ♖b8∞ Verat-C.Foisor, Guingamp 2005) 13.h3 d5. Now in the game Antic-Cabrilo, Becici 1994, Black quickly achieved an advantage after 14.exd5?! cxd5 15.♗f4 (15.♘xd5 ♗xh3∓) 15...c6 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.b3 ♕a5∓. Instead of 14.exd5?! White should have kept the tension with 14.♖d1. Then after 14...♖e8 15.exd5 ♗f5 16.♕a4 ♘d3 Black has good compensation for the pawn.

10...a5

(Similar, although somewhat less flexible is 10...♘c5)

In this KID-like type of position Black has fairly good play. First and foremost, owing to the fact that White was forced to retreat the knight from d4, Black can create more pressure with his powerful dark-squared bishop on White's queenside. Next, Black will place the knight from d7 either to e5 or c5, advance the a-pawn and enjoy a pleasant equality.

11.h3

This prophylactic move is almost always useful for White in fianchetto variations. Other options are:

– 11.f4 After this careless move Black quickly activates all pieces: 11...♘b6 12.b3 ♗g4 13.♗b2 a4 14.♖b1 axb3 15.axb3 ♖e8 16.h3 ♗xe2 17.♘xe2 ♗xb2 18.♖xb2 ♕f6 19.♖d2 ♖a3 20.♘c1 ♖a1∓ 21.♔h2 ♖ea8 22.♕f3 ♖b1 23.♘e2 ♖xf1 24.♗xf1 ♕a1 25.♗g2 ♖a3 26.♖d3 ♘b4 27.♖c3 ♖a2 28.♘d4 ♖d2 29.♘b5 ♕b2. White is in trouble, Linqvist-Yrjölä, Jyväskylä 1999.

– 11.b3 a4 (or 11...♘c5 12.♗e3 f5! 13.♖c1 ♕e7 14.♘d5 ♕f7 15.♘ec3 ♘b4 16.♕d2 ♔h8 17.♖cd1 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 fxe4 19.♗xe4 ♗h3 20.♖fe1 ♖ae8 21.♗g2 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♘xd5 23.♕xd5 ♕xd5+ 24.♖xd5 b6 equal Sher-Conquest, Hastings 1990) 12.♖b1 axb3 13.axb3 ♖e8 (13...♘c5 14.b4 ♘e6=) 14.h3 ♘c5 15.b4 ♘e6 with equal chances.

– 11.♖b1 ♘c5 12.b3 f5 13.♗e3 ♘xe4 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♘e5 16.f4 ♘g4 17.♗d4 ♘f6 18.♗g2 ♗f5 19.♖c1 c6 20.h3 h5 21.♘c3 ♕d7 22.♔h2 ♖ae8 again with equality Jakovljevic-Cabrilo, Jahorina 2003.

– 11.♗e3 ♘de5!? (this is why 10...a5 is somewhat more flexible than 10...♘c5: sometimes Black can make good use of the knight on e5 as well. 11...♘c5 is also perfectly playable. For instance in the game Lingnau-Schekachev, Bad Zwesten 2001, Black took over the initiative in the endgame: 12.♕d2 a4 13.♖ac1 ♘e5 14.♘b5 c6 15.♘bd4 ♕a5 16.♕xa5 ♖xa5 17.b4 axb3 18.axb3 ♖a2 19.♖b1 ♗d7∓) 12.b3 a4 13.h3 (dubious is 13.♕d2?! axb3 14.axb3 ♖xa1

15.♖xa1 ♕f6!∓ Maric-Vladimirov, Dubai 2005) 13...f5!? 14.f4 ♘f7 15.exf5 (After 15.♘xa4 ♗xa1 16.♕xa1 fxe4 17.♘ac3 ♘b4! White still has to prove compensation for the exchange) 15...♗xf5 with a complicated, double-edged position.

11...♘c5

In the internet blitz game Umansky-Azmaiparashvili, 2003, Black played 11...♘de5 12.b3 f5 13.f4 ♘f7 14.♗e3 fxe4 and after 15.♘xe4! ♖e8 16.g4 White seized the initiative, although the position remains very sharp and unclear. Instead of the risky 14...fxe4 Black should try 14...a4 or 14...♖e8.

12.♗e3

This apparently quiet position is full of tactical possibilities. Black has two possibilities:

A) 12...♖e8
B) 12...♗e6

Variation A

12...♖e8 13.f4

This aggressive move (White plans 14.e5) can lead to wild complications. In case of 13.b3 a4 (less convincing is 13...f5 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♕d2 ♕f6 16.♖ad1 with some edge for White in Guindy-Paasikangas Tella, Stockholm 1998) 14.♖b1 axb3 15.axb3 f5 Black has sufficient counterplay.

13...♗e6 14.b3

14...♘xe4!? 15.♗xe4

15.♘xe4? ♗xh3 is bad for White.

15...♗f5!

In Anastasian-Vladimirov, Dubai 2000, Black played 15...♗xh3 16.♕d2 ♗xf1 17.♖xf1 f5 18.♗f3 ♕d7 19.♗f2 ♖ad8 20.♘d5. However, White's two minor pieces are stronger than Black's rook and pawns, therefore 15...♗f5 is preferable.

16.♗xf5 ♖xe3 17.♘d5

White is playing the strongest moves.

17...♖xe2

The position is a complete mess. We are following the game Vakhidov-Nisipeanu, Dubai 2004, which continued:

18.♕xe2 ♘d4

Having burnt all his bridges, Black is forced to play for complications. After the materialistic 18...♗xa1?! 19.♖xa1 ♘d4 20.♕b2 ♘xf5 21.♖c1 White is much better.

19.♕d3 ♘xf5 20.g4 After 20.♖ae1 c6 21.♘c3 d5 22.cxd5 cxd5 Black will play ...d4 and install the knight on e3, with enough compensation. **20...♗xa1 21.♖xa1 c6! 22.gxf5 cxd5 23.fxg6 hxg6 24.♕xd5 ♕b6+ 25.♔g2 ♖e8** Finally material equality is restored, but White is in trouble due to the insecure position of his king and Black's control of the e-file. Black won after: **26.♕d2 ♕c6+ 27.♔g3 ♕e4 28.♖f1 ♖e6 29.♕xa5 ♕d3+ 30.♖f3 ♕d4 31.♖f2 ♖e3+ 32.♔h2 ♖xb3 33.axb3 ♕xf2+ 34.♔h1 ♕f1+ 35.♔h2 ♕xf4+ 36.♔g2 ♕e4+ 37.♔f2 ♕c2+ 38.♔g1 ♕xb3 39.♕d8+ ♔g7 40.♕xd6 ♕xc4 41.♕e5+ ♔h7 42.♕a5 ♕d4+** and White resigned.

This nice game shows the resources of Black's position. However, instead of 19.♕d3 (see the previous diagram) the computer finds the correct way for White: **19.♕e7!** and after 19...♘xf5 20.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 21.♖ae1! (21.♖ad1 ♘xg3 22.♖f3 ♘e2+ 23.♔f2 ♘d4 24.♖fd3 ♘e6∓) 21...♘xg3 22.♖f3 ♗d4+ 23.♔h2! ♘f5 24.♘xc7 ♔f8 White is slightly better, although the endgame remains quite complicated. All these wild variations are interesting and attractive for sharp players, but Black is not forced to play in this way. There is a more reliable option:

Variation B

12...♗e6 13.b3 a4

Here 13...♖e8 14.f4 (14.♖b1 f5∞) 14...♘xe4!? leads to variation A – 12...♖e8.

14.♖b1

In case of 14.♖c1 axb3 15.axb3 ♘b4 (not 15...♖a3?! 16.♘b5 ♖a2 17.♘f4 ♗d7? 18.♘d5± Seres-Resika, Budapest 2001) the position is double edged. For instance: 16.♘d5 (or 16.♘f4 c6!?∞) 16...♗xd5!? 17.cxd5 (after 17.exd5 ♖e8 Black has very active pieces) 17...♘cd3 18.♖b1 c5 19.dxc6 bxc6 with mutual chances.

14...axb3 15.axb3 f5 16.♔h2

16.♕d2 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 fxe4 18.♘f4 ♕d7 19.♘xe6 ♕xe6 20.♕d5 and now in Llorente Zaro-Ugalde Ezcurra, Mislata 2003, Black could have achieved a clear advantage with 20...♕xd5 21.cxd5 ♘d4! 22.♗xd4 (22.♗xe4 loses material in view of 22...♘e2+ 23.♔g2 ♘c3) 22...♗xd4 23.♗xe4 ♖a2∓.

16...fxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 ♗f5

The position is equal. In practice two games were played:

– 19.♗xf5 ♖xf5 20.♘d4 ♘xd4 21.♗xd4 ♖a2 22.♖a1 ♖xa1 23.♕xa1 ♕f8 24.♔g2 ♗xd4 25.♕xd4 ♕g7 26.♕e4 b6 27.♕e3 ♕e5 28.♕d2 ♕a5 29.♕e3 ♕a8+ 30.♔g1 ♖e5 31.♕c3, draw Velickovic-Sebenik, Maribor 2004.

– 19.♕d5+ ♔h8 20.♗xf5 ♖xf5 21.♕d2 ♕f6 22.♘f4 ♖fa5 23.♘d5 ♕f7 (Black is already slightly better) 24.♗h6 ♗e5 25.♕d3 ♖a2 26.♔g2 ♗d4 27.♕f3 ♕xf3+ 28.♔xf3 ♘e5+ 29.♔g2 (dangerous for White is 29.♔e4 ♗xf2 30.♘xc7 ♖e2+ 31.♔d5 ♘f7) 29...♘f7 30.♘xc7 ♘xb6 31.♘xa8 ♖xa8. In the game Kir. Georgiev-Azmaiparashvili, Groningen 1994, White did not succeed to defend this slightly inferior endgame.

CHAPTER 13

Glenn Flear

Patzer Sees a Check

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+

After the standard moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4, Black can soon tell White's intentions by giving check on b4. This 'patzer check' still raises a few eyebrows despite players of the stature of Miles, Tkachiev, Yandemirov and Zviagintsev, all having included it in their repertoires.

In New In Chess Yearbook 76 Afek calls 4...♗b4+ the Miles Variation and I don't think many would argue with that, as his efforts in the late '90s brought attention to this previously unpopular sideline.

The rules of chess dictate that White must meet the check and so he already has to decide between 5.c3 (gaining a tempo) and 5.♘c3 (developing a piece). If 5.♘c3 then 5...♘f6 leads to the safe (boring!?) equality of the Scotch Four Knights, whereas the principled 5.c3 signals to his opponent that he is ready to take up the gauntlet and Black should then oblige with 5...♗c5. Compared to the immediate 4...♗c5 White has an extra tempo (c2-c3) and already supports the d4-square, but, on the other hand, cannot use the natural c3-square for his queen's knight. The struggle between time and harmonious development will occupy the thoughts of both players over the subsequent few moves. Black's main decision is whether to develop with ...♘f6 (risking the pin with ♗g5) or ...♘ge7 (when ♕h5 can be annoying).

As the following lines demonstrate there is

nothing seriously wrong with Black's idea and he is able to set White new problems, although I don't think it fully equalizes in all lines. But what does an edge mean? In the Miles variation it often means that White has more space but to make progress he frequently has to start pushing pawns which can easily rebound on him.

So 4...♗b4+ entices White forward. It's as if Black is cheekily saying 'Come on then, do you want to try and get me!?'.

So don't be afraid to give this disruptive check. Maybe your opponent will try and punish such a patzer's move and overpress!

Summary

In Variation A White develops in classical fashion with 6.♗c4. Although in the main line (i.e. Kuzevanova-Yandemirov) Black successfully navigated the opening and went on to win, Afek's suggestion of 10.♕h5 may give White chances of keeping an opening edge. There have been very few games in this line so I'm sticking my neck out, but I recommend the adventurous reply 6...♘f6!? and then after 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.0-0, the brave 8...0-0!? further delaying ...d6.

I don't believe that 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♗d3, as in Variation B, sets many problems for Black. Afek and myself have made some improvements on an old analysis of Nataf who was clearly too optimistic about White's chances.

In the odds and ends of Variation C, White can sometimes keep a nominal pull keeping things solid e.g. 7.♘f5 or 7.♗d3.

In Variation D, after 6.♗e3 ♗b6 7.♗c4 Black has three replies (7...♘e5, 7...d6 and 7...♘ge7) all of which seem perfectly playable.

A) 6.♗c4
B) 6.♘xc6
C) 6.♗e3 ♗b6
D) 6.♗e3 ♗b6 7.♗c4

Variation A – The immediate 6.♗c4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+ 5.c3 ♗c5

The most active square.

6.♗c4 d6

A sensible move defending the c5-bishop. However, the more audacious might want to investigate 6...♘f6!? e.g. 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.0-0 (8.e5?! ♕e7 9.0-0 ♕xe5 10.♖e1 ♘e4 – this looks precarious but seems to be OK – 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♖xe3 0-0 13.♕e1 d5 14.♗d3 ♕g5 15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♖xe4 ♗h3 17.g3 ♖ab8 and Black wasn't worse in Arzumanian-Kulicov, Kramatorsk 2003)

– 8...d6!? 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 0-0 (10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘xe4 12.♖e1 d5 13.♘d2 is too risky for Black, see the next note) 11.♘d2 ♖e8 12.♖e1 and White seems to keep a pull due largely to the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal.

– 8...♘xe4 9.♕g4 d5 10.♕xg7 ♕f6 11.♕xf6 ♘xf6 12.♗d3 is playable but White has the superior pawn structure and thus keeps an edge.

– 8...0-0!? (egging White on!) 9.e5 ♘e4 10.♕f3 ♕h4 11.g3 ♘xg3?! (11...♘g5! should yield a good game) 12.♕xg3 ♕xc4 13.♗h6 g6 14.♘d2 ♕e6 15.♘e4 ♗c7 16.♗xf8 ♔xf8 Mela-Garcia Palermo, Buenos Aires 2001 and Black had insufficient compensation for the exchange.

7.0-0 ♘ge7!?

After 7...♘f6 8.♘xc6! (8.♗g5 is well met by 8...h6 9.♗h4 ♘e5) 8...bxc6 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 0-0 (10...g5?! 11.♗g3 ♘xe4? 12.♖e1 d5 13.♘d2 ♗f5 14.♕f3 Charbonneau-Beqo, Vancouver 2002 is too risky) 11.♘d2 ♖e8 12.♖e1 White keeps an edge as I've already stated in the previous note.

8.♗e3

If 8.♗g5!? then Black can get dynamic chances with 8...♘e5! 9.♗e2 0-0 10.♘d2 h6 11.♗h4 ♕e8

8...♗b6 9.♘d2 0-0

10.♘2f3

This is possibly not White's best. Afek suggests 10.♕h5 as an improvement when he prefers White slightly. Black could continue with 10...♘e5 (or 10...♕d7 11.h3 ♘e5 12.♗c2 f5 13.f4 ♘5c6 14.♗c4+ d5) 11.♗e2 f5 12.f4 ♘5c6 13.♗c4+ ♔h8 14.♖ae1 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 16.cxd4 d5 17.exd5 ♘xd5 and in each case White keeps a pull.

Alternatively, 10.h3?! is too slow: 10...♘xd4 11.cxd4 d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♕h5 ♗e6 Mietzner-Trabert, Athens 2004, and Black has the superior pawn structure.

10...♗g4 11.♕d2 ♕e8 12.♘xc6 ♕xc6 13.♗e2 ♕xe4 14.♗xb6 axb6 15.♖fe1 ♕d5 16.♕f4 ♕f5 17.♕g3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♘c6

and White had insufficient compensation for the pawn in Kuzevanova-Yandemirov, St.Petersburg 2004.

Variation B – 6.♘xc6

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+ 5.c3 ♗c5 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♗d3

7...♘e7!

Almost certainly best.

As 7...♘f6?! is dubious after 8.e5, Black has to play 7...d6 first and only then ...♘f6.

So, let us see 7...d6 8.♘d2 ♘f6 (8...h6 invests a further tempo but avoids the pin. 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.♘b3 ♗b6 and Black is somewhat behind in development, but can White exploit it?) 9.♘b3 ♗b6 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4 and as we saw in variation A, White should be a shade better once he has this pin in place.

It was instructive how Kasparov met 7...♕h4, i.e. 8.♕e2 ♘f6 9.h3! 0-0 10.g3 ♕h5 11.g4 ♕e5 12.g5 and Black had difficulties in Kasparov-Leko, Tilburg 1997.

8.h4

● Here 8.♕h5 doesn't have a good reputation: 8...d6 9.♗g5?! ♖b8! 10.b3 (Wells points out that 10.b4? fails to 10...♖xb4! 11.cxb4 ♗d4 12.♗c4 0-0 13.♕h4 ♖e8 14.♕h5 d5) 10...0-0 11.♘d2 ♕e8 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♘c4 ♘g6 14.♘xb6 axb6 15.♗e3 f5! Sax-Miles, Szeged 1997, and Black had the slightly better chances in the drawish ending that followed: 16.exf5 ♘f4 17.♕xe8 ♘xd3+ 18.♔d2 ♖xe8 19.♔xd3 ♗xf5+ 20.♔d2 c5.

● 8.♘d2 0-0 9.♘b3 ♗b6 10.c4!? c5 (block-

ing in his own bishop but in return obtaining action on the long diagonal) 11.0-0 d6 12.♖e1 ♘g6 13.♗f1 ♗b7 14.♗d2, Vorobiov-Yandemirov, St.Petersburg 2002, and now simplest is 14...♕d7 followed by ...♖ae8, completing development.

● The solid choice 8.0-0 has been the most popular, 8...0-0, and now:

– 9.♘d2 d6 10.♘b3 ♗b6 11.♘d4 c5 (an instructive idea to use the front c-pawn as a positive feature) 12.♘e2 ♘g6 13.♗c2 c4 14.♔h1 ♘e5 equal, Zviagintsev-Khalifman, St.Petersburg 1999.

– 9.♔h1 d6 10.f4 f5 11.♘d2 ♗d7 12.♕f3 ♕c8 13.♘b3 ♗b6 14.♗e3 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♗g4 and Black had equalized in Nataf-Godena, French tt 1999.

8...♘g6!

This was considered dubious by Nataf but Afek quite rightly believes it to be the best move! 8...0-0?! 9.h5 h6 10.♗xh6! gxh6 11.♕g4+ ♔h8 12.♕f4 left White on top (the threats are ♕xh6+ and ♕e5+ followed by ♕xc5) in Nataf-Miles, Mondariz 2000.

9.b4 ♗b6 10.h5 ♕f6!

My move. Afek's analysis continues with 10...♘e5 11.♗e2 d6! With equal chances (which improves on an analysis of Nataf where he gave White the advantage after 11...d5?! 12.h6 g6 13.f4!).

11.♕e2

Alternatives are nothing special either:

– 11.♕f3 ♘e5 12.♕xf6 ♘xd3+ 13.♔d2 gxf6 14.♔xd3 ♗xf2 leaves White a pawn down although the position remains complicated.

– 11.0-0 ♘e5 12.♗e2 d6 and Black should be comfortably placed. The h-pawn push looks distinctly out of place.

11...♘e5

It's even plausible to try 11...♘f4 12.♗xf4 ♕xf4 13.♘d2 d6 with equality.

12.♗c2

If 12.f4 then 12...♘xd3+ 13.♕xd3 a5! obtaining a clear advantage due the queenside pressure.

12...d6!

Tempting but probably not quite correct is 12...♗a6!? due to 13.♕xa6 ♕xf2+ 14.♔d1 ♕xg2 15.♖f1. Here 12...a5?! is too slow due to 13.f4.

13.f4

Not good but White already faces a difficult choice. For, 13.h6 can be strongly met by 13...♘g4 (or 13...g5), and 13.♗e3 is answered by 13...a5.

13...♘g4

And Black is better.

Variation C – 6.♗e3 ♗b6 7.others

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+ 5.c3 ♗c5 6.♗e3 ♗b6

Here we look at no less than seven alterna-

tives to 7 ♗c4 (Variation D). The high number of attempts is perhaps an indication that White players haven't been able to find a clear path to an opening advantage.

7.♘xc6

● 7.♗e2. This unambitious development doesn't seriously threaten Black. 7...♘f6 (7...♘ge7 8.c4 d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘c3 f5 11.♘xc6 ♘xc6 12.♗xb6 axb6 13.exf5 ♗xf5 14.♕d2 Hennigan-Miles, England 1998/99. Black's simplest is 14...♕d7 followed by ...♖ae8) 8.♘d2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 Black has already equalized. 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♗xb6 axb6 12.♗d3 d6 13.h3 ♘d7 with good play in L.Bensdorp-Jonkman, Dieren 2003.

● 7.♕a4. White usually intends a rapid development of the queenside. There is a positional semi-threat of exchanging on c6 and b6 when, due to the pin along the a-file. Black will have to recapture away from the centre on b6:

– For instance after 7...♘ge7 8.♘a3 (if 8.♘xc6 then 8...bxc6!? 9.♗xb6 cxb6 shouldn't be a major inconvenience for Black) 8...0-0 9.♖d1 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xd4 11.♕xd4 d6 12.♗d3 ♘c6 13.♕e3 f5 Hector-Unzicker, Bundesliga 1999/00, and Black was fine.

– 7...♖b8!?. This permits any future capture on b6 to be met by ...axb6, but isn't altogether necessary. 8.♘d2 ♘ge7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 d6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♗xb6 axb6 13.f4 f5 14.♗d3 fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♗f5

Black had equalized in Gildardo Garcia-Miles, Ubeda 1997.

● 7.♕g4. Kasparov's choice. 7...♕f6 8.♕g3 ♕g6 (it's foolhardy to take the pawn: 8...♘xd4?! 9.cxd4 ♗xd4 10.♗xd4 ♕xd4 11.♘c3 ♘e7 12.♕xc7 0-0 13.♖d1 ♕b4 14.♖d2 Kasparov-Unzicker, Zurich 1997, and Black cannot develop without losing his d-pawn). White has tried several moves after 8...♕g6:

– 9.♘f5 d6 10.♗xb6 axb6 11.♘e3 (Black has no problems after 11.♘xg7+ ♔f8 12.♘f5 ♗xf5 13.exf5 ♕xf5) 11...♘f6 12.f3? (correct would be 12.♘d2 ♕xg3 13.hxg3 0-0 14.f3 ♖e8 15.♔f2 with a fairly balanced position) 12...♕b6! 13.♕f2 d5!

and Black seized the initiative, Nakamura-Goldin, Buenos Aires 2003.

– Otherwise White has 9.♘d2 ♘ge7 10.♗c4 when after 10...d6?! (I prefer 10...♘xd4 11.♗xd4 0-0 e.g. 12.0-0 ♕xg3 13.hxg3 ♖d8 14.♖fe1 ♔f8 with near equality) 11.♕xg6 fxg6 (11...hxg6? gets into trouble after 12.♘b5!) 12.♘c2 (now after 12.♘b5(!) Black can grovel with 12...♔d8 but White would then keep an edge with 13.♗xb6 axb6 14.0-0 ♗d7 15.f4) 12...♘e5 13.♗xb6 axb6 14.♗b5+ ♗d7 15.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 16.♔e2 g5!, Trabert-Hermann, Bad Wörishofen 2004, Black was able to equalize.

– A recent try is 9.♕f4!? ♕f6 (more dynamic is 9...♘xd4!? 10.cxd4 ♘e7 11.♘c3 0-0 with an interesting struggle ahead. White bears down on the c7-square after 9...♘f6?! 10.♘b5!) 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘d2 d6 12.♗d3 ♕xf4 (White also keeps a pull after 12...♗xe3 13.♕xe3 ♘e7 14.0-0 0-0 15.f4) 13.♗xf4 ♘e7 14.a4! a5 15.♘c4 and White had some pressure in Wang Hao-Torre, Kuala Lumpur 2005.

● 7.♘f5. This takes the sting out of Black's counterplay. White can then count on more space à la the Maroczy-Bind, but in practice hasn't been able to make anything of his grip on the d5-square. 7...♗xe3 8.♘xe3:

– 8...♘f6 9.f3 0-0 10.c4 ♘e5 11.♘c3 d6 12.♗e2 a6 13.♕d2 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♖b8 15.a4 Stopping any ...b5 ideas, but now the queenside pawns become fixed. 15...a5 16.♖ad1 b6,

Tseshkovsky-Golod, Biel 2005, with a continuing space edge, but it will be difficult to make progress without trying the slightly risky f3-f4.

– 8...♘ge7 9.c4 0-0 10.♘c3 d6 11.♗d3 ♘d4 12.0-0 c5!? (this is a bit committal. Is ceding the d5-square worth control of d4? Black could content himself with 12...♘ec6 13.♖c1 ♖e8 14.f4 a6 when his pawn structure is perfectly sound but White still has a pull after 15.♕h5) 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h6 ♔h8 15.♖ae1 a6 16.♘cd5 ♘g8 17.♕f4 left White with a comfortable edge in Savchenko-Sorokin, Sochi 2004.

● 7.♘d2. Here White delays any decision about his bishops and can even think about ♘d2-c4.

– The problem with 7...♘f6 is that, as the e-pawn is defended, White has time for the annoying pin as follows 8.♘xc6! bxc6 9.♗g5! h6 10.♗h4 0-0 11.♗d3 ♖e8 Borgo-Godena, Bolzano 1998, when a draw was agreed, but White wasn't very ambitious as after 12.0-0 d5 (or 12...d6) 13.♖e1 he has a small but persistent edge.

– 7...♘ge7 8.♘c4 (or 8.♗d3!? ♘e5 9.♘c4 Zahariev-Miles, Hania 1997, when Black's simplest path to equality is 9...♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 0-0 11.0-0 d5!; please note that 8.♗c4 could easily transpose to variation D) 8...♗xd4 9.♗xd4 0-0 10.♘e3 (10.♗d3?! makes it easy for Black who obtained the better chances after 10...d5 11.♘e3 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 f5! 14.♗f3 f4 Hoen-Miles, Slough 1997) 10...d5 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♕xd5 13.♗e3 ♕e6 14.♗e2 ♕g6 15.0-0 ♖d8 Dovliatov-Stryjecki, Aviles 2000, and Black is active enough to compensate White's bishop pair.

● 7.♗d3:

– After 7...♘f6 I would recommend 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♗g5.

– Areschenko-Bacrot, Istanbul 2003, was not very convincing: 7...d6 8.♘d2 ♘f6 9.h3 (9.♘xc6! bxc6 10.♗g5! should yield an edge) 9...0-0 10.0-0 (again 10.♘xc6! bxc6 11.♗g5 is preferable) 10...h6 play is equal 11.g4?! ♖e8 12.f3, and now Afek recommends 12...d5 when Black is better.

– 7...♘ge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♕h5 can be met by 9...♘xd4 10.♗xd4 (Black seems to be OK following 10.cxd4 d5 11.exd5 g6 12.♕f3 ♘xd5) 10...♘g6! 11.♗xb6 axb6 12.f4 d6 and although White has some attacking chances Black is solid.

7...bxc6 8.♗d4 ♕g5!?

Highly combative. The alternative 8...♘f6 also invites White to overpress. After 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♗c4 0-0 11.0-0 Sutovsky-Onischuk, Polanica Zdroj 1999, I think that Black is doing fine after 11...♖b8!.

9.h4!?

In T.Kosintseva-Stefanova, Varna 2002, there followed 9.♘d2 ♗xd4 10.cxd4 ♖b8 11.b3 ♘f6 12.e5 ♘d5 13.g3 0-0 14.♗g2 (I'm not keen on giving up the f1-a6 diagonal but White already has holes everywhere) 14...♗a6, and Black stood well and went on to win.

9...♕g6 10.♘d2

If 10.♖h3 (why not?) then 10...♘e7! 11.♘d2 ♗xd4 12.cxd4 ♕f6 is double-edged.

10...♗xd4!

I prefer this to 10...♘f6 11.♕f3 0-0 12.♗d3 ♕g4 13.♗xf6 ♕xf3 14.♘xf3 gxf6 15.♘d4 Baklan-Vouldis, Ano Liosia 2000, as White then has the better pawn structure in the ending.

11.cxd4 ♖b8

In the spirit of the variation! White has to decide what to do with his b-pawn before continuing development.

12.h5

12.b3 may lead to weaknesses on the dark squares.

12...♕d6 13.♘b3 ♘h6

With dynamic counterplay. Amongst a wide choice of available plans Black can envisage ...a5, and/or ...0-0 followed by ...f5.

Variation D – 6.♗e3 ♗b6 7.♗c4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4+ 5.c3 ♗c5 6.♗e3 ♗b6

The principled move here is

7.♗c4

Now Black has three moves.

7...♘ge7

This is our main line, but the alternatives are fine too.

● 7...♘e5:

– Following 8.♗e2 Black has to decide whether to go for ...d5 or not: 8...♘f6 (I consider 8...d5?! to be dubious: 9.f4! – this attempt at a refutation seems justified – 9...♘g4 10.♗xg4 ♕h4+ 11.♗f2 ♕xg4 12.♕xg4 ♗xg4 13.f5 c5, E.Berg-Staniszewski, Rowy 2000, and now White failed to play the strong 14.♘b5!) 9.f4 ♘c6 10.♗f3 d6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♗xb6 axb6 13.0-0 (Black obtains enough counterplay after 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♕xd5 ♖a5 16.♕c6+ ♗d7 17.♕e4 0-0 18.0-0 dxe5) 13...0-0 14.♖e1 ♗e6 15.a4 ♕c8 16.♘d2 ♗g4 with solid equality, Garma-Torre, Quezon City 2001.

– 8.♗b3 ♘f6 9.♘c2 d6 10.f3 ♘h5!? (an unusual but exciting plan. 10...0-0 11.0-0 c6

with the idea of ...d5 should be equal) 11.0-0 ♘f4 12.♔h1 g5 13.♕d2 ♕f6, Novak-Krstic, Pula 2000.

● 7...d6 8.0-0 (Black shouldn't be troubled by 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♕f3, e.g. 9...♕f6 10.♕f4 ♕xf4 11.♗xf4 ♘f6 12.f3 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♘a3 ♗b7 16.0-0-0 0-0-0, Motylev-Zviagintsev, Linares 2000) 8...♘f6 9.♗g5!? (not as convincing here as in various analogous positions, because the e-pawn isn't defended) 9...h6 10.♗h4 ♘e5 11.♗b5+ c6 12.♗a4 g5! (it's actually safe to grab the e-pawn) 13.♗g3 ♘xe4 14.♘d2 ♘xg3 15.fxg3 ♕e7 16.♔h1 ♗g4 17.♕b3 0-0-0, Areschenko-Kulicov, Kramatorsk 2003, and White had not enough compensation.

8.0-0 0-0 9.♕h5

The only unpleasant move for Black.

9...d6

If instead 9...♘xd4 10.cxd4 d6, White can put his knight on c3. Not a good idea, as, apart from giving White an extra option, and thus better chances of an edge, in principle it's against the spirit of the Miles Variation!

10.♘d2

In Stavropoulou-Trabert, Aghia Pelagia 2004, Black found a neat riposte after 10.f4?! with 10...♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 12.cxd4 d5! 13.♗xd5? (13.exd5 ♘f5!=) 13...c6 and was already better.

10...♘xd4

The right moment. It's best to delay this move until White has played his knight to d2. The text is therefore more appropriate than 10...♘e5 11.♗e2 f5 12.f4 ♘5c6 Rohler-Halser, Graz 2002, and now 13.♗c4+ ♔h8 14.♖ae1 and White is better mobilized and keeps some advantage.

11.cxd4

11.♗xd4 ♗e6! doesn't seem to give White much e.g. 12.♗b3 ♗xb3 13.♘xb3 ♘c6 14.a4 ♕e7 15.♖fe1 ♕e6 equal in Yagupov-Yandemirov, Tula 2003.

11...♗e6!?

Alternatively, 11...c6! angling for ...d5 should be OK, e.g. 12.♖ad1 (12.♗d3 f5=) 12...d5 with a playable game.

12.♗xe6

After 12.d5 then 12...♗xe3 13.fxe3 (13.dxe6? ♗xd2 is another good reason why Black wants the knight on d2!) 13...♗d7 14.♘f3 f6 is rock solid, especially as White's structure is compromised.

12...fxe6 13.♕h3 ♕c8 14.♘f3 e5 15.♕xc8 ♘xc8 16.♖fd1

With 16.dxe5!? ♗xe3 17.fxe3 dxe5 18.♖ac1 c6 19.♖fd1 ♘b6 20.b3 White can keep a slight pull.

16...exd4 17.♗xd4 ♖e8 18.♖e1 ♘e7 19.♖ad1 ♘c6

With an equal position in the game Tseshkovsky-Malaniuk, Krasnodar 1999.

CHAPTER 14

Adrian Mikhalchishin

The Bellon Gambit

When White avoids the Benoni/Volga

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘f3

White avoids the main lines of the Benoni or the Volga Gambit.

3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5

A sharp attempt to gain the initiative. In practice this position also occurs via the move order 1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5.

5.♘b5 The only serious reply. **5...d5 6.cxd5 ♕a5+**

A move that was introduced by the Spanish grandmaster Juan Manuel Bellon, well known for his sharp and inventive style. More common are 6...♗b4+ and 6...♗c5.

7.♘5c3 b5

The main position of the Bellon Gambit.

8.♘d2

White should concentrate on his development. Other moves are less testing.

● 8.a3 b4 9.♕a4+ ♕xa4 10.♘xa4

Black has equal chances in this ending.
– 10...♗d7 11.axb4 ♘xd5 12.b5! ♗xb5 13.e4 ♗xf1 14.♔xf1 ♘c7 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.♘d2 ♘e6 17.g3 ♗b4 18.♔g2 0-0 19.♘c4 ♖fe8 equal, Panno-Bellon, Palma 1972.
– 10...♘xd5 11.e4 ♘c7 12.♗e3 ♘c6 13.♘d2 bxa3 14.bxa3 ♘d4 15.♗xd4 exd4 16.♘b3 ♗e7 17.♘xd4 ♗d7 18.♘c3 ♗f6 19.♖d1 0–0 and Black has compensation for the pawn in the form of the two bishops, Adamski-Barlov, Prague 1981.
– 10...♘xd5 11.e4 ♘c7 12.♗c4 ♘c6 13.axb4 ♗xb4+ 14.♗d2 ♗c6 15.♗xe6 ♘xe6 16.0-0 0-0 17.♗xb4 ♘xb4 with equality in Rogers-Barlov, Bor 1986.
● 8.♕d3 b4 (not 8...♗a6 9.e4 b4 10.♘b5) 9.♕b5+ ♕xb5 10.♘xb5 ♘a6 11.♘d2 ♘xd5 12.♘c4 f6 (bad is 12...♗d7 13.e4!) 13.e4 ♘dc7 14.♘cd6+ ♔d7 15.♘xc8 ♔xc8 16.♗e3 ♔b7 17.♘xc7 ♘xc7 18.♗c4. So far we have followed Bruno-Cussac, Caorle 1982. Here 18...♗e7 19.♔e2 ♖hd8 would have given chances of equality.
● 8.e3 b4 9.♕a4+ ♕xa4 10.♘xa4 ♗d7 11.b3 ♘xd5 12.♗b2 f6 and now 13.♗c4 is slightly stronger than 13.♘d2?! ♘b6! 14.♘xb6 axb6 15.♗c4 ♗c6 16.0-0 ♘d7 17.♖fc1 ♗c5 with equality in Mikhalchishin-Wirig, Steinbrunn 2005.

8...b4

9.♘ce4

This is most testing. After 9.♘b3 ♕d8 10.♘a4 ♕xd5 11.♕xd5 ♘xd5 12.e4 Black, again, has no particular problems in the ending. He can play:
– 12...♘b6 13.♘xb6 axb6 14.♗e3 ♗e6.
– also good is 12...♘f6 13.♘ac5 (worse is 13.f3?! ♗e7 14.♘ac5 0-0 and then 15...♘bd7, exchanging the active white pieces) 13...♘bd7 14.♗e3 (14.♗b5 ♖b8) 14...♘xc5 15.♘xc5 ♗d6 16.♗b5+ ♔e7 17.♔e2 ♘d7 18.♖hc1 ♘xc5 19.♗xc5 ♗e6 with good chances of equalizing.
Also possible is 9.♕a4+ ♕xa4 10.♘xa4 ♗d7 11.b3 ♘xd5 which leads to similar positions as above.

9...♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♗b7 Less good is 10...f5?! 11.♘g5 ♗e7 12.e4 when White is superior. **11.♘g3**

After 11.g4!? ♘a6 12.♗g2 ♖d8 13.0-0 ♗xd5 14.♗g5 ♗e7! 15.♗xe7 ♔xe7 16.♕c1 ♖he8 17.♕g5+ ♔f8 Black had no problems in Lombardy-Martin Gonzalez, Olot 1974.

11...♗xd5

Worse is 11...♕xd5 12.♕xd5 ♗xd5 13.e4 ♗e6 14.♗b5+ ♗d7 15.♗c4 ♗c5 16.♗e3! ♗xe3 17.fxe3 ♘c6 18.0-0 0-0 19.♘f5, and White's position was clearly preferable in Aseev-Vasiljevic, Budapest 1989.

12.e4 ♗e6 13.♘f5 ♘c6 14.♗d2 g6 15.♘e3 ♗d6 16.♗c4 0-0 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♖ac8

And in Schroll-Schumi, Finkenstein 1990, Black had obtained equal chances.

CHAPTER 15

Jeroen Bosch

Kozul's SOS against the Rossolimo

Sublime provocation – 3...♘a5

The Rossolimo Variation is quite popular at the moment. It has always enjoyed the reputation of being one of the strongest anti-Sicilians. These days in particular it is used by many as a means of avoiding the still unshakable Sveshnikov. In this chapter we will examine a perfect SOS answer to 3.♗b5.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘a5

Yes, that's it! Black simply moves the knight to the edge, leaving the bishop to hit thin air. A subsequent a6 (and b5) will win some useful Sicilian tempi. Having thus chased away the bishop, the inexhaustible knight will either return to its c6-stable or, alternatively, comfortably rest on c4 – common practice in Taimanov and Scheveningen positions. Should we be worried by the fact that 3...♘a5 presents an outright violation of Tarrasch's famous dictum? Well, the answer is twofold I guess. John Watson has observed (in *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*) that chess is far less rule-bound than we may have thought in the past. As he points out, chess is always a concrete game, and general rules like 'don't move your knight to the edge of the board' may actually be counter-productive. It is clear, however, that 3...♘a5 against the Rossolimo is an extremely provocative move to say the least. So, if White were to find a line in which the knight simply finds itself stuck on the edge of the board, well, then you're in real trou-

ble. Now, for the good news. In the past, the move 3...♘a5 found favour in the eyes of several grandmasters (enough, at least, to play it a couple of times). Vasiukov, Miles, Minasian, Fominikh and Kozul are or were among its adherents. The latter especially has used it quite often. A good way of learning a new line is by examining the games of a specialist. Therefore, our SOS investigation will concentrate on four games of Zdenko Kozul's.

□ **Aljosa Grosar**
■ **Zdenko Kozul**
Maribor 1994 (5)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘a5 4.d4

Moving the game into an open Sicilian. Although not a bad move, it is exactly what Black intended.

– 4.b3 (a more quiet way to develop) 4...♘f6 (and here is another provocative knight move. 4...a6) 5.e5 ♘d5 6.d4 e6 7.0-0 a6 8.♗d3 cxd4 9.♗e4! d6 10.♗xd5 exd5 11.exd6 ♘c6 12.♖e1+ ♗e6 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♕xd4 ♗xd6! 15.♕xg7 ♔d7 with interesting play. The game went 16.♗g5 ♖g8 17.♗xd8 ♖xg7 18.♗f6 ♖g6 19.♗d4 ♗h3 20.g3 ♖c8 21.c3 ♗c5, and because of White's undeveloped queenside, Black had excellent compensation for the pawn, Pavasovic-Kozul, Bled 1994.

– 4.b4 (going for immediate punishment) 4...a6 (4...cxb4 5.d4 – 5.a3 – 5...a6 6.♗d3 d5! 7.e5 ♗g4! 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 e6∓ Bauza-Milos, Moron 1982) 5.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 6.bxa5 ♘f6 7.♘c3 ♕xa5 8.e5 ♘g4 9.0-0 e6 10.♘e4 ♗c6 11.♖e1 0-0-0, with interesting complications in Kochetkov-Fominikh, Moscow 1995.

4...a6 5.♗e2 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♕c7

More aggressive is 6...b5 7.0-0 ♗b7 8.♕d3 (if White has nothing better than this slow move, then 6...b5 deserves serious consideration) 8...e6 9.a4 b4 10.♘d2 ♕c7 11.f4 ♖c8 12.♔h1 ♗c5 13.b3 ♘e7, and Black was OK in Prokopchuk-Chernishov, Pardubice 1997.

7.0-0 e6

8.♕d3

With 8.c4!? White sets up a Maroczy bind, counting on 8...♘xc4 (8...♘f6 9.♘c3 b6, as in the game, is safer) 9.♗xc4 ♕xc4 10.♘c3 ♘f6 11.♗f4, planning ♖c1 and ♘a4, with compensation, according to Tamas Horvath. This verdict can be corroborated. Now 11...♗c5 appears to win a useful tempo for the defence. However, after 12.♗e5! d6 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♘b3! ♗b4 (14...♗d7?! 15.♖c1 ♕b4) 15.♕f3 ♗xc3 16.♖ac1 White has more than enough for the pawn.

Far too meek is 8.c3 ♘f6 9.♕c2 b5 10.b4 ♘c6 11.♘xc6 ♕xc6 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.f3 d5, with a very satisfactory position in Konopka-Vasiukov, Moscow 1986.

After 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.♗g5 b5 10.♗f3 ♗b7 11.♖e1 ♗d6! 12.g3 ♗e5 13.♗g2 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 Black was already better in Blasek-Kiselev, Moscow 1990 (via transposition).

8...♘f6 9.c4 b6 10.♘c3 ♗b7 11.b3?!

According to Horvath, White is slightly better after 11.f3!. Steffen Pedersen does not agree and gives 11...♖c8 12.b3 b5 (analogous to the game) as satisfactory. However, it is here that we see that chess is a very concrete game. With the rook on c8 White can exploit the bad position of the knight on a5.

After 13.cxb5 ♕xc3 14.♕xc3 ♖xc3 15.♗d2 ♖c8 16.♖fc1! (16.♗xa5? ♗c5∓) 16...♗a3 17.♖c2 ♗c5 18.♖xc5 ♖xc5 19.♗xa5 axb5 20.♗b4 Fritz is correct in evaluating this as better for White. No worries, though. Both 12...♗d6 and 12...♗b4 are OK for Black.

11...♗b4! 12.f3

12...b5!

Black has achieved his queenside break. Note how well-positioned the knight on a5 suddenly is. White's pawn structure is going to be fractured. **13.♗d2 bxc4 14.bxc4 ♗c5 15.♔h1 ♘c6** The knight has done its job. **16.♘xc6 ♗xc6 17.f4 d6 18.f5 e5 19.♘d5 ♗xd5!** A well-known capture in such positions. It is better to exchange the bishop (which would bite on central granite anyway) than the knight. White's bishop pair is meaningless. His light-squared bishop is just plain bad in comparison to Black's good knight. **20.cxd5 h6 21.♖fc1 ♕a7 22.♖c4 0-0 23.♕g3 ♗f2! 24.♕f3 ♖fc8 25.♖ac1 ♖xc4 26.♖xc4 ♖b8 27.♕d3 ♖b2 28.♖a4?! ♕c5** Threatening 29...♕c4. **29.♖c4 ♕b6 30.♖c2 ♖b1+ 31.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 32.♗xc1 ♕a5** A double attack. **33.♗d2 ♕xa2 34.g3 a5 35.♔g2 ♗c5 36.♔f3 a4 37.♗c3 a3 38.♕c4 ♕b1 39.♔g2 a2 40.♕a6 ♗d4**

White resigned.

□ **Vojko Zorman**
■ **Zdenko Kozul**
Ljubljana 1993

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘a5 4.♗e2

Prophylaxis. White moves the bishop before it is attacked. He must now demonstrate that the knight is badly placed on a5.

4...e6

In a later game Kozul played 4...b6 5.♘c3 (5.c4!?) 5...♗b7 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 g6 (with this double fianchetto Black transposes to some sort of Accelerated Dragon) 8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.e5 (10.f3 d6 intending 11.♗b5+ ♘d7 12.b4 ♖c8) 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.f3 ♗b7 13.f4 0-0 14.c4 d6 Jakupovic-Kozul, Sarajevo 1998, and Black has a decent game.

For 4...a6 5.d4 cxd4 see Grosar-Kozul. Instead 5.c4 d6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘f6 8.♘c3 g6 9.♗e3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.f3 ♗d7 12.♕d2 ♖c8 13.b3 ♘c6 was Lein-Pinto, Saint Paul 2000. White is better in this Maroczy.

Interesting is 4...♘f6!? 5.♘c3 (5.e5) 5...d6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 (7.♘xd4 g6 – the Dragon is Black's best Sicilian here, since the c6 knight often wanders off to a5 – and c4 – there) 7...♗d7 8.♗g5 ♘c6 9.♕d3 h6 10.♗h4 (10.♗xf6 gxf6=) 10...♕a5 11.0-0-0?! ♘b4 12.♕d2 ♘xa2+ 13.♘xa2 ♕xa2 14.♕b4 ♕a1+ 15.♔d2 ♕a4 16.♕xa4 ♗xa4

Chebotarev-Lugovoi, Elista 2001. White does not have enough for the pawn.

5.0-0 ♘f6

Provoking e5. In the stem game with 3...♘a5, Vasiukov played 5...d6. After 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘f6 8.♘c3 a6 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♕d3 h6 11.♗h4 ♘c6 12.f4 ♗d7 13.♔h1 ♘xd4 14.♕xd4 ♗c6= 15.♖ad1 0-0 16.♖f3 ♘e8 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♖fd3 ♖c8 19.♗f3 e5 a draw was agreed in Sigurjonsson-Vasiukov, Cienfuegos 1975.

6.e5 ♘d5 7.c3

Playing for d4 is not the only reasonable set-up. For example, 7.c4 ♘f4 8.d4 ♘xc2+ 9.♕xe2 b6!?, and 7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.dxc3 d5.

7...a6

This takes the game into the line 4.0-0 a6 5.♗e2 e6 6.c3 ♘f6 7.e5 ♘d5. See the next game: Barle-Kozul.

8.d4 cxd4 9.c4

Or 9.♕xd4 ♘c6 10.♕e4 f5 (10...d6) 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♕c2 ♗e7 13.c4 0-0 14.♘c3 ♕c7 15.h3 b6 with equality in Wang Hao-Howell, Halkidiki 2003. The normal reply is 9.cxd4, as in our next game.

9...♘e7

The best square in the circumstances. Black is going to attack the outpost e5.

10.♕xd4

Here the more aggressive 10.b4 deserves attention. Dragojlovic-Milanovic, Kladovo 1994, went 10...♘ac6 11.b5 axb5 12.cxb5 ♘b4 13.a3 d6 (13...♘f5; 13...b6) 14.♗b2 d3 (14...♘bd5 15.exd6 ♕xd6 is safer) 15.♗xd3 ♘xd3 16.♕xd3 dxe5? (16...♘f5!) 17.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 18.♘xc5 ♔e8 19.♘c4! ♘d5 20.♘c3±.

10...♘g6 11.♗d3

Freeing the e-file to cover e5. 11.♘c3 ♘c6 12.♕e4 ♕c7 is already awkward to meet.

11...♕c7 12.♖e1 ♘c6 13.♕e3

Not the best square in view of a subsequent ♗c5 (13.♕e4).

13...♘b4! 14.♘c3 ♗c5 15.♕e2 ♘xd3 16.♕xd3 0-0 White has the freer game (more space), but Black has good long-term prospects owing to his bishop pair.

17.h4 d6 18.exd6 Here 18.♘g5 does not work: 18...dxe5 19.h5 ♖d8 20.♕c2 ♘f8.

18...♗xd6 19.♘e4 ♗e7 20.♘eg5 ♖d8 This makes the f8 square available.

21.♕e4 h6 22.h5 ♘f8 23.♘h3 ♗d7 24.♘e5 ♗e8 A well-known manoeuvre à la Steinitz. Black now has a safe advantage. **25.♗f4 ♕c8 26.♕e3 f6!** Winning a pawn. **27.♘g6 ♗xg6 28.hxg6 e5 29.♗xh6?** A desperate move. **29...gxh6 30.♕xh6 ♕g4 31.♖e3 ♗c5! 32.♖f3** 32.♖g3?? ♕xg3. **32...♕xg6−+ 33.♕h4 ♖d4 34.♕xf6 ♕xf6 35.♖xf6 ♖xc4 36.♖d1 ♖g4 37.♖d5 ♗d4 38.b3 ♘h7 39.♖fd6 ♖f8 40.♖d7 ♘f6**

White resigned.

□ **Janez Barle**
■ **Zdenko Kozul**
Maribor 1996

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘a5 4.0-0 a6

It is better to chase away the bishop now. Should Black allow 5.♖e1, then White can withdraw the bishop to f1.

5.♗e2 e6

Kozul prefers this move, but 5...d6 and 5...♘f6 are playable alternatives.

6.c3

Or 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 (it is not a good idea to play a kind of Morra Gambit 7.c3?! dxc3 8.♘xc3 b5 9.♗f4 ♗b7 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.♕d2 ♘e7 12.♖fd1 ♘g6 13.♗g3 ♗e7∓ Fröhlich-Miles, Bad Wörishofen 1997) 7...♕c7, which transposes into Grosar-Kozul.

Setting up a bind is again possible: 6.c4 ♕c7 7.♘c3, and now:

● 7...♘f6 8.b3 ♘c6 9.♗b2 ♗d6!

– 10.h3 0-0 (10...b6) 11.d4 cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♗e5 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♕c1 c5 15.f4 ♗d4+ 16.♔h1 d6= Sadvakasov-Fominikh, Omsk 1996.

– 10.♔h1 h5 (standard in Taimanov-like positions) 11.h3 b6 12.d4 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♕xd4 ♗b7 15.♗f3 ♗e5 16.♘b5 axb5 17.♕xe5 ♕xe5 18.♗xe5 bxc4 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.bxc4 ♔d8∓ Kosteniuk-Danailov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

● 7...♘e7 8.b3 (8.d4) 8...♘ec6 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♗d6! 11.♘f3 ♘e5 12.♘d4 ♘ec6 13.♘f3 ♘e5 14.♘d4 ♘g6 Lebedev-Fominikh, Moscow 1994. Black is definitely no worse and plays for the win.

6...♘f6

This is often the best solution when White plays for the perfect centre with c3 and d4. After 7.e5 the knight obtains a good square on d5. Alternatively, 6...d5?! 7.exd5 ♕xd5 8.d4 leaves the knight misplaced on a5.

7.e5 ♘d5 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4

For 9.c4 and 9.♕xd4, see the previous game.

9...♗e7

A previous Kozul effort saw 9...b5 10.♗g5 (better is 10.♘c3 ♗b7 11.♘e4) 10...♕b6 11.♘c3 ♗b7 12.♘e4 h6 13.♗d2 ♘c4 (13...♘c6!?) 14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.♖c1 ♘b4 16.♗xb4 ♗xb4 17.♘ed2 ♗xd2 18.♘xd2 ♗d5 19.♘xc4 ♗xc4 20.♖xc4 ♕xb2 with equality in Arkhipov-Kozul, Munich 1993.

10.♘bd2

More common is 10.♘c3 0-0

– 11.♘xd5 exd5, followed by ...d6.

– 11.♗d3 b5?! (this is the cause of Black's future problems. Better is 11...d6 12.♕c2 g6

– 12...h6 13.♕e2 – 13.♘xd5 exd5 14.♗h6 ♖e8 15.♖fe1 ♗e6, with equal play) 12.♕c2 g6 13.♘xd5 exd5 14.♗h6 ♖c8 15.♖fe1 ♗b7 16.♕c1! ♘c6 17.♕f4± Kazhgaleev-Nataf, Cappelle la Grande 1995.

– 11.♘e4 b5 (11...♘c6) 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.♕d2 ♘c6 15.♖fc1 f6 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18.d5. This looks strong, but after 18...♘e7 19.dxe6 dxe6 20.♕d4 ♘d5 Black has active piece play to compensate for his structural weaknesses. 21.♘e5 ♘f4 22.♗f3 ♗b7! 23.♖e1 ♗xf3 24.♘xf3 ♕g6∓ Jansa-Estevez Morales, Cienfuegos 1975.

10...b5 11.♘e4 h6!?

11...0-0 12.♗g5 would have transposed to the previous note (Jansa-Estevez).

12.♗d2 ♗b7

13.♘c5?!

This is too ambitious. Tamas Horvath gives 13.♗d3 ♖c8 14.♕e2 ♘c4 as unclear. Obviously Black has managed to turn his early 3...♘a5 into the start of a useful positional manoeuvre. Note that White has not played very consistently with ♗f1-b5-e2-d3.

13...♗xc5 14.dxc5 ♘c6 15.a4 b4 16.♗d3 f5 17.exf6 ♕xf6 18.♗e4

This looks strong, but as the game demonstrates, Black need not fear the exchange on d5. Black has a lot of activity anyway.

18...0-0 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♕b3 ♔h8 21.♗xb4

White can also take on d5: 21.♕xd5 ♘a5 (21...♘d8 22.♕h5 ♗xf3 23.♕xf3 ♕xf3 24.gxf3 a5=) 22.♕h5 (22.c6 ♕xc6 23.♕xc6 (23.♕xa5 ♖xf3∓) 23...♘xc6) 22...♘b3 23.♖ad1 ♗xf3 (not 23...♕xb2? 24.♗xh6+–) 24.♕xf3 ♕xb2 25.♕d5, with roughly equal chances.

21...d4 22.♗d2 ♘d8 23.♖ae1 ♗xf3 24.♕xf3 ♕xf3 25.gxf3 a5 26.♖e4

Tamas Horvath gives 26.♖e7 ♖a7 27.♖fe1 ♘c6 28.♖e8 ♔g8∓.

26...♘c6

A complicated ending with approximately equal chances has arisen. **27.♗f4 ♖f5 28.♖c1 ♖af8 29.♗d6 ♖8f7 30.f4 ♖d5 31.♖d1 ♔h7 32.♖d3 ♔g6 33.f3 ♔f5 34.♔f2 ♖f6 35.h4 ♖e6 36.♖xe6 ♔xe6 37.♖d1 ♖h5 38.♔g3 ♔d5 39.b3 g6 40.♗f8 ♖f5 41.♗d6?!** 41.♗xh6 ♔xc5 42.♔g4 ♔b4 43.♖d3 ♔a3 44.♗g7 ♘b4 45.♖xd4 d5=. **41...♖f6 42.♔f2 ♖e6 43.♖e1?** This is a major mistake, allowing Black to play good knight versus bad bishop. With the rooks on White was in no danger of losing. **43...♖xe1 44.♔xe1 h5–+ 45.♔d2 ♘d8! 46.♔c2 ♘e6 47.♗e7 ♘xc5 48.♗d8 d3+ 49.♔c3 d2! 50.♔xd2 ♘xb3+ 51.♔c3 ♘c5 52.♗xa5 ♘xa4+** Having got rid of the pawns on the queenside, the knight is left to do what it is best at: play on one flank. **53.♔d3 ♘b2+ 54.♔e2 ♔e6 55.♗c3**

♘c4 56.♔d3 ♘d6 57.♗a5 ♔f5 58.♗c7 ♘e8 59.♗d8 ♘g7 60.♗g5 ♘e6 61.♔e3 d5 62.♗h6 ♘xf4! 63.♔d4 ♘e6+ 64.♔xd5 g5! 65.♔d6 gxh4 66.♗e3 h3 67.♗g1 ♘g5
White resigned.

□ **Drazen Cvorovic**
■ **Zdenko Kozul**
Pula 1993 (6)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘a5 4.c3 a6
Or 4...♘f6 5.e5 ♘d5 6.d4, and now White can always withdraw his bishop to d3, with the better game.
5.♗a4
The Ruy Lopez way of handling this line is best. After 5.♗e2 ♘f6 6.e5 ♘d5 7.d4 cxd4 8.0-0 e6 9.♕xd4 play is about equal. Raiano-Nemet, Mendrisio 1988, went 9...♘c6 (9...b5 10.♘bd2 ♗b7 Gubanov-Vasiukov, St Petersburg 1996, is also possible) 10.♕d1 b5 11.a4 b4 12.c4 ♘de7 13.♘bd2 ♘g6 14.♘e4 ♗b7 15.♗g5 ♕b8 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.exd6 0-0, with a decent game.
5...e6
Kozul's preferred choice. Clearly 5...b5 is an important alternative. Note that these lines will often boil down to the same thing. After **5...b5** 6.♗c2

6...e6 7.0-0 ♗b7 reaches the same position as in the game. Instead Black has also tried:
– 6...d6 7.b3 ♕c7 8.d4 e5 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.♖e1 ♗e7 11.♘bd2 0-0 12.♘f1 Maze-Kjartansson, Reykjavik 2004. This appears sound until you realize that Black is simply a tempo down on the main line of the Chigorin Variation of the Closed Spanish.
– 6...d5 7.d4 dxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗b7 9.♗xb7 ♘xb7 10.0-0 has been played by Dambrauskas, but cannot be recommended.
– 6...♕c7 (playing for tricks along the c-file. It loses time though) 7.0-0 ♗b7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘f6 10.♖e1 ♖c8 (the point of Black's previous play, he wins a pawn. With his king stuck in the centre, this is perhaps not such a great achievement) 11.♗d3 ♘xe4 (11...♗xe4) 12.b4 ♘c3 13.♘xc3 ♕xc3 14.♗f4 ♘c4 15.♖c1 ♕xb4 16.♘g5 Bogachkov-Rodjko, Novosibirsk 1998. With an attack for the two-pawn deficit.
Also worthy of attention is **5...c4** 6.0-0 b5 7.♗c2 ♗b7 8.b3 (8.b4) 8...g6 9.♕c2 ♗g7 10.bxc4 bxc4 11.♗a3 ♘f6 12.♗b4 0-0 13.♘a3 d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xa5 ♕xa5 16.♘xc4 ♕c7, and Black has enough compensation for the pawn, Finkel-Rogozenko, Internet 2001.
Finally, Black can also try **5...♘f6** 6.♗c2 (6.e5 ♘d5 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 e6 9.0-0 b5 10.♗c2 ♘c6 11.♕g4∞ Novikov-Gusev, Tula 2002) 6...b5 7.0-0 ♗b7 8.♖e1 (8.e5 ♘d5 9.d4 cxd4 10.♕xd4 e6 11.♘bd2 ♘c6 12.♕e4 d6 13.exd6 ♗xd6 14.♕g4 ♘f6!= – intending 15.♕xg7 ♗xh2+! – Galego-Pinheiro, Bobadela 2002) 8...e6 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4, and now instead of 10...♗e7 11.e5 ♘d5 12.♕g4, Kobelev-Fominikh, Perm 1997, Black should play 10...♘c6 or 10...♕c7.
6.0-0 b5 7.♗c2 ♗b7 8.d3
This is too meek. The only way to take advantage of the a5 knight is by grabbing hold of the centre (square d4). So White should play 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘f6

The critical position. Black has done fairly well in practice with 10.e5 ♘d5 11.♘bd2. Hracek-Minasian, Manila 1992, is crucial for the evaluation of this line. After 10.♕c2 ♖c8 (10...d5 11.e5 ♘e4 12.♘bd2 ♘xd2 13.♗xd2 ♗e7 is a possible alternative) 11.♗d3 ♗e7 (now 11...d5 12.e5 ♘e4 13.♘bd2 ♘xd2 14.♗xd2 ♗e7? 15.♗xb5+! fails because the rook does not protect a5) 12.♘c3 d5 13.e5 ♘d7 14.♗f4 ♘b8 15.g3, and although Black later won, White is better at this stage. Naturally, 10.♖e1 is a serious alternative for White. In general, the reader should decide whether he feels comfortable in the diagrammed position or whether he prefers any of the alternatives mentioned on move 5.

8...♘f6 9.♖e1 ♗e7 10.♘bd2 d5 11.e5 ♘d7 12.d4

Now we're heading into the French. White has prevented all ♘e4 ideas with 8.d3. However, the loss of time and Black's queenside expansion (the direct consequence of 3...♘a5 and a6, b5) give Black a lot of counterplay.

12...b4 13.cxb4 cxb4 14.b3

Perhaps White should try to do without this move, even though it means allowing the knight free access to the c4 square.

14...♘c6 15.♘f1 a5

Note that Kozul refrains from castling – he won't castle at all in this game. The pawn chain predetermines the course of game. White has more space on the kingside and should attack there. Hence, no kingside castling for Black!

16.g4

Attacking 'Luft'.

16...♗a6 17.♘g3 ♕b6

Attacking the base of the pawn chain – it falls too quickly in the game.

18.♗e3 ♘a7

On its way to some good squares.

19.♘d2?

Unattractive as it may seem, White should have cut his losses and played for a stubborn defence by exchanging his 'good bishop' with 19.♗d3.

19...♘b5

Now White is in major trouble. His next move blunders material.

20.♕f3? ♘xd4 21.♕f4 ♕c7

Unpinning and attacking, but 21...♗c5 also works.

22.♗f5? ♘c6 23.♖ac1 g5 24.♕d4 ♘xd4

Simplest.

25.♖xc7 ♘b5

White resigned.

CHAPTER 16

Igor Glek & Elena Sedina

Alekhine's Blunder

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6!?

Introduction
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5

According to modern chess theory in this position Black has a choice of 3 main continuations:

1. The sharp MacCutcheon Attack: 4...♗b4.
2. The more solid and strategical 4...♘e7.
3. The attempt to simplify: 4...dxe4.

Lately, Black has some problems in my favourite MacCutcheon. And both 4...♗c7 and 4...dxe4 lead to positions with a small plus for White. Therefore, I decided to return once again to Alekhine's audacious move:

4...h6

This involves a pawn sacrifice, and was first played by Alekhine in his game against Capablanca in St Petersburg in 1914. A game that he ignominiously lost, by the way. Almost nobody remembers this move. Was

it really an interesting sacrifice or, perhaps, a simple blunder of the undisputed chess genius Alexander Alekhine? Of course, we cannot answer this question. Yet, I do believe that this is one of those forgotten and unexplored variations that may offer Black a lot of practical chances. By the way, I first analysed this sacrifice back in 1995-96 together with my friend, and Moscow-based GM, Yury Piskov who played some games with this line in the 1990s.

5.♗xf6

White should accept the sacrifice, as after 5.♗h4?! Black has two good options:

Firstly, Black can transpose the game into the MacCutcheon Variation with 5...♗b4, after which White has a choice between 6.exd5 ♕xd5 7.♗xf6 gxf6 and 6.e5 g5 7.♗g3. Both continuations promise White no advantage. In the first case the position of Black's pawn on h6 (instead of h7 after the 'correct' move order) can't make any difference – sometimes it even useful for Black. Secondly, Black may consider 5...g5 6.♗g3 ♘xe4 (6...dxe4 is also possible) 7.♘xe4 dxe4 which leads to an unclear position with chances for both sides – in my opinion Black stands well.

5...♕xf6 6.exd5

After 6.e5?! ♕d8 Black has the better prospects thanks to his pair of bishops. Interesting is 6.♘f3!?. This is how GM Erik van den Doel played against me in a recent rapid game. After some minutes thinking he decided not to take the pawn. Black was OK though: 6.♘f3 ♗b4 7.♗d3 c5 8.exd5 exd5 (also not bad is 8...cxd4!? 9.♘xd4 ♕e5+ 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♕xd5) 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♘e5 ♘c6 12.♘xc6 ♕xc6 13.♖e1 c4 14.♗e2 ♖e8 15.♗f3 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♗e4 (16...♖ad8!?) 17.♗xc4 dxc4 18.d5 ♕c5 19.♖ad1 ♖ad8 20.♕d4 ♕xd4 21.♖xd4 ♖e5 (21...f5!?) 22.♖exe4 ♖xe4 23.♖xe4 ♖xd5 24.♔f1 b5 25.♖e8+ ♔h7 26.♔e2 ♖d6 27.♖b8 a6 28.a4 ♖e6+ 29.♔d2 ♖d6+ 30.♔e2 ♖e6+ 31.♔d2, ½-½ Van den Doel-Glek, Vlaardingen rapid 2005.

6...♗b4

Now White may decide: to give a check on b5, or to take on e6 immediately. Also possible is 7.♘e2 which leads to the MacCutcheon – see the game Unzicker-Piskov. Actually, it was because of this line of the MacCutcheon that Piskov and I were stimulated to try and revive Alekhine's sacrifice. The third World Champion played

7.♗b5+

which is, probably, most dangerous for Black, and after

7...c6 8.dxc6

Alekhine made a dubious move.

8...♘xc6?!

after which Black's compensation for the pawn is not sufficient. The main continuation remains 8...bxc6 with good possibilities for counterplay (see especially the recent game Morozevich-Glek, where Black was even clearly better at the end).

Conclusion: in our opinion, 4...h6 is a playable option for Black and can be used as an alternative to the main lines. The variation leads to a sharp struggle and can be recommended to a tactical player. We hope to see more games in the near future which may

show us if Black has enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

Accepting the pawn sacrifice – 7.♗b5+

□ **Alexander Morozevich**
■ **Igor Glek**
Mainz 2005 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.exd5 ♗b4 7.♗b5+ c6 8.dxc6 bxc6

Alekhine played the weaker 8...♘xc6?!, and after 9.♘e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♖d8 11.♘e4 ♕h4 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.f4 ♗a6 14.c3 ♗f8 15.♕e1 ♕h5 16.♖f2 c5 17.♘xc5 ♗xc5 18.dxc5 ♕xc5 19.♘d4 White was a sound pawn up, and Capablanca converted this advantage in exemplary fashion. Capablanca-Alekhine, St Petersburg final 1914.

Incidentally, after 8...♘xc6, 9.♘f3 looks even better than the move played by Capablanca. After 9...0-0 10.0-0 ♖d8 11.♘e4 ♕f4 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♕e2 ♗e7 14.♖fd1 ♖b8 15.c4 ♗b7 16.♘e5 ♗a8 17.c5, Kovchan-Vavrak, Oropesa del Mar 1998, White had achieved a winning position.

9.♗e2

All other bishop retreats are less convincing, for example:

– 9.♗d3?! ♕xd4 10.♘e2 ♕h4 and Black has retrieved his pawn.

– 9.♗a4 0-0 10.♘f3 c5 11.0-0 (after 11.a3 Black plays 11...♗a5 and White cannot avoid the transposition 12.0-0 ♗b7) 11...♗b7 12.a3 ♗a5 13.dxc5 ♖d8 14.♕e2 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♕xf3 16.gxf3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♘a6 18.c6 ♘c5 19.♗b5 a6 followed by ♖a8-c8xc6, and Black has the better ending owing to White's inferior pawn structure.

– 9.♗c4 0-0 10.♘f3 c5 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.a3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♖d8 14.♖b1 (after 14.♘e5 ♘c6! 15.f4 cxd4 16.♖b1 dxc3 17.♘d7 ♕e7 18.♖xb7 ♘a5 19.♖c7 ♘xc4 20.♖xc4 ♖xd7 Black is slightly better) 14...♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♕xf3 16.gxf3 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♖xd4 18.♗b5 ♘d7 and Black's position is preferable.

9...0-0 10.♘f3 c5 11.0-0 ♖d8 12.♘e4 ♕f4 13.a3 ♕xe4 14.axb4 cxb4

15.♘d2

In Jurczynska-Krumova, Bydgoszcz 1978, 15.♖e1 ♗b7 16.♗a6 ♕c6 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7 18.♕d3 ♕d5 19.♖e5 ♕d7 20.♖c5 ♘c6 led to approximate equality.

15...♕b7 16.♗f3 ♘c6 17.♘b3 ♕b6 18.c3 bxc3 19.bxc3 ♖b8 20.♘c5 ♘e5 21.♗e2 ♘d7 22.♘a6?!

Stronger was the simple 22.♘xd7 with equal play. After the text Black is slightly better.

22...♗xa6 23.♖xa6 ♕b2! 24.♖c6 ♖bc8

This is stronger than 24...♘f6, when after

25.♗f3 e5 26.d5!? (26.♕a1 exd4 27.cxd4 ♕xd4 28.♖a6=) 26...e4, White has the exchange sacrifice 27.♖xf6 gxf6 28.♗xe4.

25.♖xc8 ♖xc8 26.c4 ♖d8 27.d5

27...♘b6

There is a good alternative in the form of 27...♘c5 28.♗f3 a5 29.♕a1 (29.♕e1 ♕b4 30.♕e2 a4∓) 29...♕xa1 30.♖xa1 a4 31.♔f1 ♔f8 (31...e5) 32.♔e2 ♖b8 33.dxe6 fxc6.

28.♖e1 ♕b4

Too sophisticated, after the simple 28...exd5!? 29.c5 (29.cxd5 ♖xd5 30.♗d3 g6) 29...♘a8 30.♕a1 ♕b4 31.c6 ♘c7 32.♖c1 ♖e8 33.♗d3 a5 Black is better. After the move in the game Alexander can wiggle out with

29.♕b1! ♕xb1 30.♖xb1 exd5 31.c5 ♘c4 32.♖d1 ♘a5

The game will also end in a draw after 32...♘e5 33.♗a6 ♔f8 34.f4 ♘c6 35.♗b7 ♘a5 36.♗xd5 ♘c6 37.♗f3 ♖xd1+ 38.♗xd1.

33.♗f3 ♖c8 34.♖xd5 ♔f8 35.g3 ½-½

☐ **Murray Chandler**
■ **Yury Piskov**
Germany Bundesliga 1995/96

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4

Note the move order in this game.

5.exd5 h6 6.♗b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.♗e2 0-0 10.a3!?

This idea can put some obstacles in Black's way.

10...♗a5?!

The point of playing 10.a3 before 10.♘f3 is that Black cannot play 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 c5?? in view of 12.♗f3.

So after, 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 we should investigate:

– 11...♖d8 is probably the best move, after 12.♕d2!? White can raise some problems once again. (After 12.♘f3 c5 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♗b5 ♗b7 15.♗xc6 ♗xc6 16.♘e5 ♖ac8 17.♕d3 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♕f4 19.♘xc6 ♖xc6 Black regains the sacrificed pawn, obtaining full equality.) 12...♘d7 (12...♗b7 13.♖b1) 13.♘f3 (13.f4 ♗b7 14.♘f3 c5 15.0-0 ♖ac8⩱) 13...c5 14.0-0±.

– 11...c5?! is also insufficient for equalization: 12.♘f3 cxd4 13.cxd4 c5 14.0-0 ♖d8 15.c3 ♘c6 16.♕a4 cxd4 17.♖ad1! Ranieri-Sedina, Bratto open, 2005. White maintains an extra pawn as 17...dxc3?? loses after 18.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 19.♕e8+ ♔h7 20.♕e4+ winning.

11.♘f3 c5 12.0-0 ♗xc3?

Without any doubt the consequences of the loss of tempo will be very grave for Black. The only possibility for Black to stay in the game was 12...♗b7 13.♘a4 cxd4 14.♕xd4

♕g6 with some compensation for the pawn thanks to his strong bishops.

13.bxc3 ♘c6 14.♗d3! ♖b8

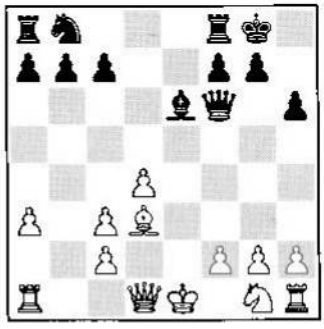
White is also better after 14...♗b7 15.♖b1 ♖ab8 16.♕e2.

15.♕e2 ♖d8 16.♕e4 ♗b7 17.♖ab1 ♗a8 18.♖xb8 ♖xb8 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.♕h7+ ♔f8 21.♕h8+ ♔e7 22.♕xb8 ♘f3+ 23.gxf3 ♕xf3 24.♕c7+ 1-0

Accepting the pawn sacrifice – 7.dxe6

□ **Hikaru Nakamura**
■ **Robert Guevara**
Long Island 1998

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.exd5 ♗b4 7.dxe6 ♗xe6 8.a3!? ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.♗d3



10...c5

Serious attention deserves 10...♕g5!?. After 11.♘f3 ♕xg2 12.♖g1 ♕h3 13.♗e4 c6 14.♖g3 ♕h5 we have an unclear position which doesn't seem dangerous for Black. In the event of 11.♔f1 c5 Black's compensation for the pawn would be sufficient. Of course, all these ideas should be tested in practice.

11.♘e2 ♗d5 12.f3 ♕h4+ 13.g3 ♕e7 14.♔f2 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♕f6 16.♘f4 ♕xd4+ 17.♔g2 ♔h8 18.♘xd5 ♕xd5 19.♗e4 ♕xd1 20.♖hxd1 ♘c6 21.♖db1 ♖ab8 22.♖b5 ♖fc8 23.♖ab1 b6 24.♖d5 ♘e7?

The ending is about equal. Fine are 24...♖c7 and 24...g6. As well as the more forcing: 24...♖d8 25.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 26.♖d1 g6 27.♖d7 a5 28.♗d5 ♔g7 29.c4 ♔f6 30.h4 ♘e6 31.f4 b5 32.c5 b4 33.axb4 axb4 34.c6 ♖b5.

25.♖d7 f5 26.♗d3 ♘c6 27.♗xf5 ♖f8 28.♗e4 ♖bc8 29.♖bd1 a6 30.♖1d6 ♘e5 31.♖e7 ♘c4 32.♖dd7 ♘e3+ 33.♔h3 ♘f5 34.♖e5 ♘e3 35.♗b7 ♘xc2 time 1-0

□ **Saevar Bjarnason**
■ **Jacek Bednarski**
Copenhagen 1981 (1)

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.exd5 ♗b4 7.dxe6 ♗xe6 8.♘f3 0-0

This is stronger than 8...♘c6 which White may answer with 9.a3 (or 9.♗b5!? after 9...♗d5 10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 0-0 12.♖e1 a6 13.♗d3 ♖fe8 14.♘d2 ♕g5 15.♘e4 Black does not have full compensation for a pawn) 9...♗a5 (or 9...♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♗d5 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♖fc8 13.♘d2 and White has some advantage) 10.♗b5 0-0 11.0-0 ♖ad8 12.♘c4 ♕f4 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘c5 ♗c4 15.♘d3 ♕f5 16.♘fe5 ♗xd3 17.♕xd3 ♕xd3 18.cxd3 and White realised his extra pawn, Alvarez del Monte-Varlotta, Uruguay 1960. That is why the text move, which prepares to attack White's centre with ...c5, is stronger.

9.♗d3

After 9.♗e2 ♖d8 10.0-0 c5 11.♕d3 Black could have equalized in Szmetan-Bronstein, Buenos Aires 1988, by playing 11...cxd4 12.♘e4 ♕g6 13.♘g3 ♕xd3 14.♗xd3 ♘c6. Also equal is 11.♘e4 (instead of Szmetan's

11.♕d3) 11...♕f4 12.a3 ♕xe4 13.axb4 cxb4.

9...c5

Regaining the pawn with 9...♗xa2?! is dubious: 10.0-0 ♗e6 11.♕e1! c6 (11...♕f4 12.♘e2!) 12.♘e4! ♕e7 13.c3 ♗d6 14.♘xd6 ♕xd6 15.♕e4 f5 16.♕e5 and White has converted his extra pawn into a big positional advantage.

10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♘c6 12.♗e4 ♖fd8

13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♕e2 ♗g4 15.♖fd1 ♖e8 16.♕d3 ♖ad8 17.♖ab1 ♗f5 18.♕d2 ♗g4 19.♕d3 ♖e6 20.♖e1 ♗xf3 21.♕xf3 cxd4 ½-½

Odds and ends – declining the pawn sacrifice

□ **Lhamsuren Myagmarsuren**
■ **Robert Byrne**
Lugano Olympiad 1968 (7)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♗g5 h6 4.♗h4 e6 5.e4 g5

We would reach this position via the move order 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗h4 g5. See Galkin-Belozerov for 5...♗b4.

6.♗g3

6...dxe4

In Wade-Pachman, Havana 1964, there followed: 6...♘xe4 7.♘xe4 dxe4 8.h4 ♗d6?! (stronger was 8...♖g8 9.hxg5 hxg5 10.♘e2 ♗d6∞) 9.♗xd6 cxd6 10.♕g4 gxh4 11.♕g7 (11.♕xe4±) 11...♖f8 12.♕xh6 ♕a5+ 13.c3 ♘c6 14.♕e3 d5 15.♘e2?! (15.♖xh4=) and now Black was clearly better after 15...♘e7 16.♕g5 ♘f5.

7.h4

Worse would be 7.f3 ♗b4 8.a3 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♘c6 10.♗b5 ♗d7 11.♕e2 ♘d5! 12.♕xe4? (12.♗c4 ♘xc3 13.♕e3 ♘d5 14.♕xe4 ♕e7∓) 12...♘xc3 13.♕d3 ♘xb5 14.♕xb5 ♘xd4 15.♕c5 ♘c6 with a winning edge in the game Gores-Todorcevic, Las Palmas 1995.

7...♖g8 8.hxg5 hxg5 9.♕e2 ♗b4 10.♕c4 ♘d5 11.0-0-0

White has compensation after 11.♘e2 ♘c6 (11...f5!?∞) 12.a3 (12.0-0-0? ♘a5−+) 12...♘a5 13.♕a2 ♗xc3+ 14.♘xc3.

11...♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♗a3+

Quite good is 12...♗d6!? 13.♗xd6 (not 13.d5 c6! 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.dxc6 ♕f4+ 16.♔b1 ♘xc6∓) 13...♕xd6 14.f3 ♘c6 15.fxe4 ♕f4+ 16.♔b1 ♕xe4 17.♘f3 ♕d5 18.♖h5 ♕xc4 19.♗xc4 g4 20.♘g5 ♔e7 21.♖f1 (or 21.d5 ♘a5 22.♗e2 exd5 23.♖xd5 ♘c6 24.♖h7 ♗c6) 21...♖g7 and Black is slightly better.

13.♔b1

13...c6?!

This is dubious, much better are 13...♗d6 and 13...♘c6. Now White gains the initiative.

14.f3! ♕b6+ 15.♕b3 exf3 16.♘xf3 ♘d7 17.♗d3 ♘f8 18.♘e5 ♕xb3+ 19.axb3 ♗e7 20.♗e2 f6 21.♗h5+ ♔d8 22.♘f7+ ♔d7 23.c4 a5 24.d5! cxd5 25.cxd5 ♗b4

White would win after 25...exd5 26.♖xd5+ ♔c6 27.♗f3 and 25...e5 26.d6 ♗d8 27.♗g4+ ♔e8 28.♗xc8 ♔xf7 29.♗xb7 ♖b8 30.♗d5+. In the game Byrne manages to confuse the issue, and even win.

26.dxe6+ ♔xe6 27.c3 ♗xc3 28.♘h6 ♖g6 29.♗xg6 ♘xg6 30.♖d6+ ♔e7 31.♖c1 ♘f4 32.♗xf4 gxf4 33.♖cd1 a4 34.bxa4 ♖xa4 35.♔c2 ♗e5 36.♔b3 b5 37.♘g8+ ♔f7 38.♘h6+ ♔g6 39.♘g8 ♗xd6 40.♖xd6 ♔f7 41.♘xf6 ♗e6+ 0-1

□ **Alexander Galkin**
■ **Andrey Belozerov**
Tomsk 2004 (8)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4 5.e5 h6 6.♗h4 g5

The game follows the regular MacCutcheon move order. We would reach this position after 4...h6 5.♗h4 ♗b4 6.e5 g5.

7.♗g3 ♘e4 8.♘e2 f5!

I like this much better than the other theoretical option 8...c5 9.a3 ♗xc3+ 10.♘xc3.

9.exf6 ♕xf6 10.a3

Black is also comfortable after 10.♕d3 ♘c6 11.f3 ♘xg3 12.hxg3 ♗d7. Worse is 11.0-0-0?! ♘xf2 12.♗xf2 ♕xf2. De la Riva Aguado-Vallejo Pons, Cala Galdana 1999.

10...♘xg3 11.♘xg3 0-0 12.f3 ♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 e5 14.♗e2 ♘c6 15.dxe5 ♕xe5 16.0-0 ♗e6 17.♕d2 d4 ½-½

□ **Wolfgang Unzicker**
■ **Yury Piskov**
Germany Bundesliga 1991/92

We cite this game for the variation 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.exd5 ♗b4 7.♘e2 0-0 8.a3 ♗a5 see the position in the game after Black's 8th move.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4 5.♘e2 h6!?

The alternative in the MacCutcheon is 5...dxe4.

6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.a3 ♗a5! 8.exd5

This is best. After 8.b4 ♗b6 9.e5 ♕e7 10.♘a4 (10.♘f4 a5 11.b5 ♘d7 12.♗e2 ♘xe5 13.♘cxd5 exd5 14.♘xd5 ♕e6 15.♘xb6 ♘f3+ 16.gxf3 ♕xb6 and despite the minus pawn Black is better Palamara-

Guglieimetti, Ticino 1992) 10...♗d7 11.c3 0-0 12.♘f4 ♗e8 13.g3 f6 14.exf6 ♕xf6 15.♖a2 ♘c6 16.h4 ♗f7 17.♗g2 ♖ad8 18.0-0 e5 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♘xd5 ♕d6 21.c4 ♘xc4 22.♘ac3 ♕xg3 23.♕e2 ♖xd5 24.♕xc4 ♖d6 White resigned in Hector-Glek, Copenhagen 1995.

No good is 8.e5 ♕e7 9.♘g3 c5 10.♗b5+ ♘c6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.dxc5 ♕xc5 14.♘ce2 ♗c7 and Black was clearly better in Schwaegli-V.Lutz, Chiasso 1991.

Finally 8.♕d3 led to a draw after, 8...dxe4 9.♕xe4 0-0 10.♕e3 b5 11.♘g3 a6 12.♘e4 ♕e7 13.♘c5 ♗xc3+ 14.♕xc3 ♘d7 15.♘xd7 ♕xd7 16.♗e2 ♗b7 17.0-0 ♕d6 18.♖fd1 ♖ac8 19.b4 ♗d5 20.a4 c6 21.g3, ½-½ S.Polgar-Psakhis, Hoogeveen 1997.

8...0-0 9.♕d3

Bad is 9.♕d2? ♖d8 10.dxc6 ♗xc6 11.0-0-0 ♘c6∓.

9...♖d8 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.0-0-0 ♕xf2 12.♘e4 ♕f5 13.♘c5! ♕xd3 14.♖xd3 ♗c8 15.g3 ♘d7 16.b4 ♗b6 17.♗g2 c6

18.♘f4!

18.♖hd1 ♘f6 19.d5 cxd5 20.♗xd5 ♗f5∓, Piskov.

18...a5 19.♔b2 ♘f6 20.d5! axb4 21.axb4 ♗xc5 22.bxc5

22.dxc6 ♗d4+ 23.c3 ♗xc3+ 24.♖xc3 bxc6∓.

22...♗f5 23.dxc6 bxc6

And now Piskov indicated that White could have kept equal chances with 24.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♗xc6 ♖c8 26.♗b5 ♖xc5 27.♗d3.

CHAPTER 17

Mikhail Gurevich

Flexibility Zone

Anti-Meran with 5...a6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 a6!?

This strange move in the Anti-Meran was recently revived, and is now enjoying its second youth. Played by Akiba Rubinstein in the late 1920s, Alexander Alekhine twice lost with Black to Max Euwe in their World Championship's match in 1935. The modern development of this variation owes much to the games of Michele Godena. I personally added this line to my repertoire after my knock-out match against Alexander Morozevich during the FIDE World Championship of Moscow 2001. As of 2002 I started playing it regularly (and not unsuccessfully I might add). The infamous game Kasparov-Fritz, which we will discuss later, gave a strong and new impulse to the latest development of this variation.

Black's ideas behind 5...a6 are deep and diverse. Black actually waits for White's next move before revealing his strategy. Depending upon White's reaction the game may transfer to the Tarrasch Defence, the Queen's Gambit Accepted, and even to Stonewall structures in some variations.

White has several playable possibilities here. The most popular continuation is 6.♕c2. Other respectable moves are: 6.c5, 6.b3 and 6.a3. After 6.♗d3 Black should transfer play directly into a respectable line from the Queen's Gambit Accepted with

6...dxc4 7.♗xc4 b5 followed by 8...c5 (or an immediate 7...c5). We will not discuss every single legal move after 5...a6. It is not the moves that are important, but the ideas behind them. I will try to explain some typical schemes and structures that may occur in this line, but first of all I would like to introduce the 'Choice of the Champions':

□ **Max Euwe**
■ **Alexander Alekhine**
World Championship match 1935 (8)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘c3 a6 6.c5!?

One of the most popular, and certainly the most aggressive continuation. We will discuss the pros and cons of this move later. Here I wouldn't dare to touch the remarks and evaluations made by the great Max Euwe. So, my Respectable Reader, you have no choice but to enjoy the following great piece of the history produced 70 years ago.

6...b6

Alekhine didn't manage to understand all the nuances of the position, and his opening preparation for this game (and the next) was pretty poor for our modern standards. Russian chess historians tend to explain his play in this match by the influence of alcohol. Even if they are right, it doesn't diminish the magnificent strategical performance of Max Euwe. (M.Gurevich)

In the 10th matchgame Alekhine played the more circumspect 6...♘bd7, the game continued: 7.b4 a5?! (a dubious move – see also the next game) 8.b5 ♘e4? (but this is really questionable, stronger was 8...e5) 9.♘xe4 dxe4 10.♘d2 f5 11.f3 ♕h4+? (this check does not improve Black's chances of survival. 11...cxf3 12.♕xf3±) 12.g3 ♕h6 13.♕e2 ♗e7 (13...e5 14.fxe4 exd4 15.exd4 f4 16.♘f3± was indicated by Euwe) 14.♗g2 (stronger than 14.fxe4?! fxe4 15.♘xe4, Euwe) 14...0-0 15.0-0 ♘f6 16.♘c4 (not 16.fxe4 ♘g4) 16...♗d8?! 17.fxe4 fxe4 (17...♘g4 18.h3) 18.♘d6?! (considering the course of the game this is clearly inaccurate. 18.b6 or 18.a4 planning 19.♘e5±, Euwe) 18...♕g6 19.b6 ♗e7 20.♘c4 ♕g5 21.♗d2 (21.♘e5? ♗xc5!) 21...e5! (the best chance. 21...a4 22.♘e5 ♗xc5? 23.h4 ♕xg3 – 23...♕h5 24.♕xh5 ♘xh5 25.dxc5+– – 24.♗e1 winning, Euwe) 22.♘xe5 ♗e6 (22...♗xc5?? 23.♕c4+) 23.♖f4 ♕h6 24.a3 g5! 25.♖f2 ♕g7 26.♖af1 h5 27.♔h1 ♕h7 28.♗c3. Here White has some advantage. Alekhine's next pseudo-active move is a losing mistake: 28...h4? 29.gxh4 ♕xh4 (29...gxh4 30.♖g1+–) 30.♘g6 ♕h7 31.♘xf8 ♖xf8 32.d5! ♘xd5 33.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 34.♗d4 ♗e7 35.♕f2 ♕h4 36.♕xh4 gxh4 37.♗xe4 ♗d8 38.♗f5 ♗xf5 39.♖xf5 ♘e7 40.♖f6 ♘c8 41.♖xc6!. A nice way to finish the game! 1-0 Euwe-Alekhine, World Championship match 1935 (10).

7.cxb6 ♘bd7 8.♘a4 ♘xb6 9.♗d2

9...♘xa4 10.♕xa4 ♕b6!?

Here 10...♗d7 is met by 11.♘e5.

11.♖c1

This is stronger than 11.♗a5 ♕xb2 12.♕xc6+ ♘d7 when Black's active queen gives him sufficient counter chances.

11...♗d7 12.♘e5 ♕xb2 13.♘xd7 ♘xd7 14.♗d3

White loses his advantage if he takes on c6. For instance: 14.♕xc6 ♗b4 15.♗xb4 ♕xb4+ 16.♔d1 ♔e7 17.♗d3 ♖ab8, and 14.♖xc6 ♗a3 15.♖c7 ♕b1+ 16.♔e2 ♕b5+, Euwe.

14...♖b8 15.♔e2

White is better, as a6 and c6 are both weak, while 16.♖b1 is a threat.

15...♖b6 16.♖b1

16.♖xc6 ♖xc6 17.♖b1! ♕a3 (17...♕xb1 18.♗xb1±) 18.♕xc6± was given by Alekhine.

16...♕a3 17.♕xa3 ♗xa3 18.♖xb6 ♘xb6 19.♖b1 ♘d7 20.♗xa6

White has a superior ending with his bishop pair, outside passed pawn and active rook.

20...♔e7 21.♖b3 21.♗b7 ♖b8 22.♖b3 ♔d6 is only equal. **21...♗d6 22.♗b7 c5 23.a4 ♗b8 24.♖b5! ♗a7 25.dxc5** Also possible was 25.a5 cxd4 26.exd4 ♗xd4? 27.a6 ♖b8 28.♗e3 and wins, Euwe. **25...♘xc5 26.♗b4 ♔d6 27.a5 ♔c7 28.♗xc5** 28.a6 ♘d7 29.♗xd5? exd5 30.♖b7+ ♔c6 31.♖xa7 was insufficient! (Euwe). **28...♗xc5 29.♗xd5 ♔d6** Now, in view of the opposite-coloured bishops, some technique is still required. Euwe is up to the task. Not 29...exd5 30.♖xc5+ ♔d6 31.♖c3 and the rook ending is winning. **30.♗b7 ♗a7 31.a6 ♖d8 32.♖b2 ♖d7 33.♖d2+ ♔e7 34.♖c2 ♖d6 35.♖c7+ ♖d7 36.♖c2 ♖d6 37.f4 f5 38.♖c8 ♖d8 39.♖c7+ ♖d7 40.♖c3 ♖d6 41.♖c7+** The sealed move.

41...♖d7 42.♖c3 ♖d6 43.h4 g6 44.♖c2 h5 45.♖c3 This spoils nothing, but White has a direct win in the opposite-coloured bishop ending: 45.♖c8! ♖d8 46.♖xd8 ♔xd8 47.e4 ♔e7 48.exf5 exf5 (planning ♔b7, Euwe) For example: 49.♗d5 ♔d6 50.♗f7 ♔c6 51.♗xg6 ♔b6 52.♗xh5 ♗b8 53.♔f3 ♔xa6 54.♗g6 ♔b5 55.♗xf5. **45...♖b6 46.♖c7+ ♔d6 47.♖g7 ♖b2+ 48.♔d3 ♖a2 49.♖xg6 ♖a3+ 50.♔c4 ♗xe3 51.♗d5! ♗xf4 52.♖xe6+ ♔c7 53.♖c6+ ♔b8 54.♖g6** Here 54.♖b6+ ♔a7 55.♔b5 does not win because of 55...♖a5+! 56.♔xa5 ♗c7. **54...♗c7 55.♗b7 ♔a7 56.♖g5 ♗d8 57.♖xh5 ♗xh4 58.♖xf5** With two pawns ahead the win is no longer problematic. Not 58.♖xh4?? ♖a4+. **58...♔b6 59.♖b5+ ♔c7 60.♖b3 ♖a5 61.♔d4 ♗f2+ 62.♔e4 ♔d6 63.♖d3+ ♔e6 64.♗c8+ ♔e7 65.♖d5 ♖a4+ 66.♔f5 ♗g3 67.♖d7+ ♔f8 68.a7 ♗f2 69.♗a6!** Black resigned in view of 69...♖xa6 70.♖d8+ ♔e7 71.a8♕ ♖xa8 72.♖xa8. **1-0**

The following game attracted an enormous amount of attention, and gave a powerful impulse to the variation's development. Despite the Computer's loss, many more grandmasters started to play 5...a6. I would like to

mention here the importance of the context in which this game was played. It was one of the last equal encounters in the historical battle between the Human and the Machine. Think of the disastrous match between Adams and Hydra and you know what I mean. We can't compete with computers anymore. So what? Let's not get depressed. Did Chess become less attractive to the Humans? I don't think so. Did the runners stop running when cars became quicker?

□ **Garry Kasparov**
■ **COMP Fritz X3D**
New York X3D m 2003 (3)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 c6 5.e3 a6 6.c5!?

This is an especially smart choice when playing against a computer. It closes the game, and limits the space within which the black pieces can operate. The game centres on understanding and less on calculation.

6...♘bd7

The alternative is 6...b6!? 7.cxb6 c5 8.♗d3 ♕xb6 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.♗c2 ♗d6 11.e4 dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗xe4 ♗b7 14.♗xb7 ♕xb7 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 16.b3 0-0 17.♗b2 ♗e7 18.♖c1 ♗f6 19.♕e2 ♗xb2 20.♕xb2 ♘f6 equal in Gavrikov-Kallai, Mazatlan 1988.

7.b4 a5?!

Not the best reaction, in my opinion, but the computer follows in the steps of the great Alexander Alekhine. There are disadvantages to the availability of a huge database! Also, I suspect, he (or she?) is desperate (can computers be desperate? ... or feel anything at all?) to open the play followed by its algorithm. No, I better stop even trying to explain the logic behind the silicon brains.

8.b5 e5 9.♕a4!?

A strong idea, probably one of Garry's numerous that lie dormant in his database. The computer knows Kasparov's moves but not his concept. In Kortchnoi-Godena, Saint Vincent 2003, there followed instead: 9.bxc6 bxc6 10.dxe5 ♘e4 11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.e6 fxe6 13.♘d4 ♘xc5 14.♗c4 ♘d3+ 15.♗xd3 ♗b4+ 16.♗d2 exd3 17.♗xb4 axb4 18.♕h5+ g6 19.♕c5 ♕d5 20.♕xc6+ ♕xc6 21.♘xc6 b3 22.♔d2 ♗b7 with an equal endgame.

9...♕c7 10.♗a3 e4??

The stupid machine shows its lack of understanding of the game. The best choice was probably 10...exd4, keeping the centre open.

11.♘d2 ♗e7 12.b6

This wins more space on the queenside, and cuts the a5 pawn off. White is strategically winning, although it requires Kasparov's technique and great accuracy to neutralize Black's counterplay on the kingside.

After 12.♗e2 h5 13.b6 ♕d8 14.h3 ♘f8 15.0-0-0 ♘e6 16.♘dxe4! White won a pawn in Reshevsky-Keres, World Championship, The Hague/Moscow 1948.

12...♕d8 13.h3 0-0 14.♘b3 ♗d6!?

Witty, but White is not forced to take.

15.♖b1

15.cxd6?? ♘xb6 loses the queen.

15...♗e7 16.♘xa5

Picking the fruits of his superior opening play.

16...♘b8 17.♗b4 ♕d7 18.♖b2 ♕e6 19.♕d1 ♘fd7 20.a3 ♕h6 21.♘b3 ♗h4 22.♕d2 ♘f6 23.♔d1!

The key moment in White's strategy. The king will be well protected on the queenside, and without any danger to His Majesty, the extra pawn will tell.

23...♗e6 24.♔c1 ♖d8 25.♖c2 ♘bd7 26.♔b2 ♘f8 27.a4 ♘g6 28.a5 ♘e7 29.a6 Creating a protected passed pawn. **29...bxa6 30.♘a5 ♖db8 31.g3 ♗g5 32.♗g2 ♕g6 33.♔a1 ♔h8 34.♘a2 ♗d7 35.♗c3 ♘e8 36.♘b4 ♔g8 37.♖b1 ♗c8 38.♖a2 ♗h6 39.♗f1 ♕e6 40.♕d1 ♘f6 41.♕a4** All White's pieces participate in the attack on the queenside. Black's position collapses as a house of cards. **41...♗b7 42.♘xb7 ♖xb7 43.♘xa6 ♕d7 44.♕c2 ♔h8 45.♖b3** I don't know exactly why the computer (or its operator) chose to resign in this particular (completely hopeless) position. Let's assume that the electricity went down. **1-0**

Now that we have paid our tribute to history, I would like to discuss the latest approach.

□ **Francesco Vallejo Pons**
■ **Mikhail Gurevich**
Sanxenxo tt 2004 (5)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘f3 a6 6.c5

A controversial move that has its pros and cons. White gains space on the queenside emphasizing the weakness of Black's pawns. However, by this move White releases the tension in the centre (c4-d5 pawn tension); his own pawn structure is static from now on.

6...♘bd7 7.b4 g6!?

Black should develop his pieces in the quickest possible way, ignoring the queenside, at least for the moment. As we saw from the previous games, all immediate tries to undermine and refute White's strategy (...b6, or ...a5) didn't work well for Black. White's pawn structure on the queenside is strong indeed, so the 'active' plans demonstrated by Alekhine and Fritz failed. With 7...g6 Black develops his bishop to g7, preparing the plan of counterplay in the centre after castling and e6-e5.

Black adopted a similar strategy in Kruppa-Vysochin, St Petersburg 2003, with 7...♕c7!? 8.♗b2 g6 9.♗d3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 e5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♕xe5 14.♘a4 ♕c7 15.h3 ♘h5 16.♗xg7, ½-½.

8.♗b2

A new plan. Vallejo puts his bishop on the long diagonal to try and stop the e6-e5 break. In the next game we will see how I tried to play this position with White.

8...♗g7 9.♗e2 ♕c7 10.♕c2 0-0 11.♘a4!?

It is all about e6-e5 break. White tries to stop

it, while Black put all his energy in making it possible. Not dangerous is therefore: 11.h3 e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕xc5 14.♘a4 ♕g5 15.g4 ♕h4 16.♘b6 ♖b8 17.♘xc8 ♖bxc8 18.♗f3 ♖ce8∓ Abdel Razik-Vysochin, Tanta City 2003.

11...♘e4

Planning 12...e5.

12.♗d3!? f5

Transferring into a Stonewall structure. Black's c8-bishop has little perspective at the moment, but e6-e5 becomes possible, and Black gains some space and good prospects for counterplay in the centre and on the kingside.

13.0-0 e5

Dubious is 13...g5?! 14.♗xe4 fxe4 15.♘xg5 ♖f6 16.f4.

14.♖ae1!?

Or 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xc5 16.♘xc5 ♕xe5 17.♘b6 ♖b8 18.a4 ♗e6 19.b5 axb5 20.axb5 f4.

14...♖e8 15.a3

If 15.♘b6 then 15...♘xb6 16.cxb6 ♕xb6 17.♘xe5 ♕xb4 18.f3 ♘g5∓.

15...♕d8!?

Prophylaxis – Black prevents White's worst piece, ♘a4, from improving. White's game is preferable after both 15...♘xf2 16.♗xf5 gxf5 17.♕xf2, and 15...♖b8 16.♘b6 ♘xb6 17.cxb6 ♕xb6 18.♘xe5.

16.♘xe5

Here 16.♘b6 ♘xb6 17.cxb6 exd4 (17...♘xf2!?) 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 19.exd4 ♕xb6 would cast away a pawn.

16...♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♗xe5 18.♗xe5 ♖xe5 19.f3 ♘f6

I was happy enough with my position. Black has sufficient counterplay in the centre.

20.h3

Both sides have chances after 20.♕c3 ♕e7 21.♘b6 ♖b8 22.♕d4 ♘d7 23.♘xd7 ♗xd7 24.♖e2 ♖e8 25.♖fe1.

20...♕e7 21.♘b6 ♖b8 22.♕f2 ♗d7 23.♕h4 ♖e8 24.♘xd7

It is not much fun to exchange this bishop, but Vallejo didn't find another way of protecting the e3 pawn.

If 24.♖f2 then 24...♘h5.

24...♘xd7 25.♕xe7 ♖5xe7 26.♔f2 ♔g7 27.g4 fxg4 28.hxg4 ♘e5 29.♗e2 g5 30.♖h1 h6

31.a4?!

A serious inaccuracy in time trouble. An unnecessarily 'active' move weakens White's pawn structure. Remember Nimzowitsch's when he explains that in the a3-c5 pawn chain the a3-pawn is the base which supports the entire chain? Moving this pawn might be (and will be in this particular game) a grave mistake that will be punished.

Preferable was 31.♖hg1 ♖f8 32.♔g3 ♖fe8 33.♔f2, or 31.♖d1 ♘d7 32.♖d3.

31...♘d7 Or 31...a5 32.♖b1 (32.bxa5 ♘d7) 32...♘d7 33.♖b3 axb4 34.♖c1 d4 35.e4, unclear. **32.♗d3 a5!? 33.bxa5?** Mistakes always come in pairs. The best try to survive was a transfer to a rook endgame: 33.♗f5 axb4 34.♗xd7 ♖xd7 35.♖b1 d4 36.♖he1, or 36.e4 ♖e5 37.♖hc1 d3 38.♖xb4 d2 39.♖d1 ♖xc5 40.♖b2=. **33...♘xc5 34.♗f5 ♘xa4** This complicates the task. Stronger was 34...♖a8 35.f4 ♖xa5 winning. **35.f4 ♘c5 36.fxg5 hxg5 37.♖h5 ♔f6 38.♖eh1 ♖g7 39.♖h6+ ♔e5 40.♖1h5 ♖a8 41.♗g6 ♘e4+ 42.♗xe4 dxe4 43.♖h7 ♖ag8!?** 43...♖xh7 44.♖xh7 ♖xa5 45.♖xb7 ♖a2+ 46.♔f1 c5 47.♖g7 ♔f6 48.♖c7 ♖c2∓. **44.♖h1 ♔d5 45.♖7h6 ♖f8+ 46.♔g2 ♖f3 47.♖d1+ ♔e5−+ 48.a6 ♖xe3 49.♖f1!? ♖a3 50.♖f5+ ♔d4 51.♖d6+ ♔e3 52.axb7 ♖xb7 53.♖xg5** 53.♖xc6 ♖b2+ 54.♔g1 (54.♔g3 ♔d4+) 54...♖a1+ 55.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 56.♔xf1 ♔f3−+. **53...♔f4 54.♖f5+ ♔xg4 55.♖f8 ♖g3+ 56.♔f1 ♖b1+ 57.♔f2 e3+ 58.♔e2 ♖b2+ 59.♔f1 e2+ 60.♔f2 ♖g2+ 0-1**

An elegant way to finish Vallejo's suffering.

□ **Mikhail Gurevich**
■ **Natalia Zhukova**
St Vincent 2004 (8)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘c3 a6 6.c5 ♘bd7 7.b4 g6 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.0-0!?

Also possible is the immediate 9.e4 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 0-0. Now in case of 12.0-0 play would transpose to my game.

In Krasenkow-Cifuentes Parada, Sanxenxo 2003, White played the slightly primitive 12.♗f4?!. However, castling is more natural here, and I always believe that Simplicity is a sister of Genius. Cifuentes, having finished his development, now started active counterplay, breaking White's exposed pawn structure with 12...a5!?. After 13.♗d6 axb4! (13...♖e8 14.b5 cxb5∞) 14.♗xf8 ♕xf8 15.0-0 e5 White's pawn structure was destroyed. Black had excellent compensation for the sacrificed exchange after 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♖c1 ♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3 ♗c6∓.

9...0-0 10.e4!?

White has finished his development and starts to play actively in the centre. O'Kelly de Galway-Cortlever, Beverwijk 1946, went 10.♗b2 e5 11.dxe5 ♘g4 12.♘a4 ♘dxe5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♘b6 ♖b8 15.♘xc8 ♖xc8 16.♕c2 ♘xd3 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕xd3 f5 and a draw was agreed.

10...dxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 a5!? 13.♗g5!?

Development first of all.

13...♘f6.

Here my opponent, grandmaster Zhukova, failed to find the best continuation. No good was 13...f6 14.♗d2 f5 15.♗c2!. The best try was 13...♗f6!?, and in case of 14.♗h6 axb4!? (14...♖e8 15.a3) similar to Krasenkow-Cifuentes, although White would have an extra tempo: 15.♗xf8 ♕xf8 16.♖b1 e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5±.

14.a3 h6 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6.

Black has gained the pair of bishops, but here this is not important, as I have: (1) managed to support my pawns, (2) have a space advantage, and (3) prevented the c8-bishop from getting out of its cage.

16.♕d2!? ♖d8 17.♕e3

With the idea of 18.♖ad1 and 19.♘e5 sealing Black's position forever.

17...♖xd4!?

The last moment for a sacrifice in a desperate try to free her forces. White would achieve his aim after 17...♕e7 18.♘e5±. Also insufficient is 17...e5 18.♘xe5 (not

18.dxe5 ♕e7 – planning 19...♗g4 – 20.h3 ♗xe5∞) 18...♗f5 (18...axb4 19.axb4 ♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♗f5 21.b5±) 19.b5.

18.♘xd4 ♕xd4 19.♖ad1!

An important intermediate move. White's rook enters the 8th rank decisively. Black has compensation after 19.♕xd4 ♗xd4 20.♖ad1 e5.

19...♕xe3 20.♖d8+ ♔h7 21.fxe3 f5

Not 21...axb4 22.♖xf7! bxa3 23.♗b1 winning.

22.b5!!

A big tactical solution, The white rook will be protected on the 8th rank. Less good was 22.♗c2 axb4 23.axb4 ♗f6 24.♖d3± – I didn't like the fact that my rook would be squeezed out of the 8th rank in this way. In case of 24.♖e8 ♔g7∓ my rook would be trapped.

22...cxb5 Or 22...fxe4 23.b6! intending ♖f1-f7-c7. Play might continue 23...g5 24.♖f7 ♔g6 25.♖c7 ♗b2 26.♖cxc8 ♖xc8 27.♖xc8 ♗xa3 28.♖xc6+– a nice tactic, remember Euwe-Alekhine? **23.♗d3! ♗f6** White wins after 23...b4 24.axb4 axb4 25.♗c4. **24.♖e8 b4 25.axb4 a4?!** After 25...axb4 there is the simple 26.♖b1, or the tactical line 26.♗c4 ♔g7 27.♗xc6 ♗xc6 28.♖xa8 b3 29.♖a5 ♗c4 (29...b2 30.♖b5 ♗d5 31.♖b1+–) 30.♖d1+–. **26.♗c4 a3 27.♗xe6 ♗xe6** 27...a2 28.♗xa2 ♖xa2 29.♖xc8. **28.♖xa8 ♗b2** 28...a2 29.b5 ♗c4 30.c6+–. **29.♖a7 ♗d5 30.♖d1 1-0**

Here we have seen two of my games played with different colours. I would like to explain. When one likes and understands (or thinks that one understands) a variation, it is possible to play it with both colours – especially if the variation is so unclear and full of different ideas. By playing this variation with both colours I follow in the footsteps of Bogoljubow and Euwe. Ivan Sokolov is another fine example in this same list of players.

Did I pay too much attention to 6.c5? Perhaps, but my choice is explainable, as 6.c5 leads to very original positions that are typical only for this variation. Other moves will often transpose to more familiar pawn structures.

□ **Valery Bronznik**
■ **Mikhail Gurevich**
Metz 2005 (3)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 a6 6.♕c2

The most popular reaction in practice. White postpones the development of his minor pieces, hoping to develop ♗f1 in one go – in case of 6...dxc4. So, we can call the move prophylaxis against the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

6...c5!?

Black introduces the Tarrasch Defence structure, creating a nice 'tension square' (c4, c5, d4, d5 pawns), and trying to prove that 5...a6 was more useful than 6.♕c2. Here there are two fundamentally different scenarios. In the first case Black will be 'saddled' with an isolated d5-pawn, and in the second case all the pawns involved in the tension-square will be eliminated. White has some 1.5 extra tempos in development for the moment, which is important to keep in mind should the game suddenly open up. But in both the above mentioned scenarios, the position of ♕c2 is questionable. The queen may well have to move with tempo considering the opening of the c-file. This is all very theoretical at the moment, so let's see how things go in practice.

7.cxd5 exd5 8.dxc5

Here is my first experience in this variation with White. 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♗e6!? (with the idea of 10...♖c8) 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.b3 ♖c8 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♖ac1 ♗a7 14.♖fd1 ♕c7 15.♕b1 ♖fd8. Black is doing great. The isolated pawn is well protected, and White has no way to increase the pressure on the d5-square. After 16.♘g5 d4 17.♘xc6 ♕xc6 18.♗c4 ♕g4 19.cxd4

I disliked my position so much here, that I offered a draw, despite the fact that it was a kind of resignation in the match. My offer was accepted immediately. Gurevich-Morozevich, Moscow 2001.

After this game I felt a strong urge to study this surprising anti-Meran. In a few months I started to play this variation, mostly with Black. And that is what I am doing until today with considerable success. There is no place for modesty here, just look at my games and the results...

8...♗xc5 9.♘e2

This move came as a surprise to me. The explanation is simple – life is too short to study and memorize all possible moves. So, I had to understand and to solve the problems of a new position behind the board. What should be my response and plan here? I will try to reconstruct my thoughts at that given moment, and to give my vision on the isolated pawn in general: Clearly, with 9.♘e2 White attacks the c5-bishop and moves his knight to the blockading square d4. This is an old classical way to deal with an isolated pawn. First you block the isolated pawn, then you consolidate and concentrate your forces for the ultimate attack on the isolated pawn. In modern chess grandmasters try to attack the isolated pawn directly (if the opportunity appears), or try to exchange a few pairs of minor pieces in order to neutralize the dynamic chances connected with the isolated pawn, and to attack it only later.

9...♘e4!?

This turned out to be a novelty, obviously invented by the author at the board. The player with the isolated pawn should look for active play using the space provided by the isolated pawn, and the squares which it protects (e4 and c4 in this particular case). Any unnecessary exchanges of the pieces have to be avoided ('we don't exchange the pieces when we attack' – Botvinnik). If exchanges are unavoidable, then the active side (that is the player with the isolated pawn!) should

exchange different kinds of minor pieces (knights for bishops, or bishops for knights), and the player who fights against the isolated pawn should exchange similar pieces (knights for knights, and bishops for bishops). So far our discussion has been very theoretical, however, in due course we will support all these considerations.

Previously, practice had seen 9...♗d6 10.♘ed4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♖e8 12.0-0 ♗d7 13.b3 ♘c6 14.♗b2 ♘b4 15.♕b1 ♘e4 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♕c2 a5 with dynamic chances for Black in Drozdovsky-Malakhatko, Kharkov 2004.

10.♘ed4 ♘d7!?

This looks slightly artificial perhaps, but is, in fact, a very concrete way of developing the pieces. The knight avoids the exchange on c6 (like in the previous Malakhatko game) and looks forward to kingside activity with the manoeuvre ♘d7-f6-g4. Interestingly, I handed over, and even refused to think about, the control of the blockading square d4. An alternative was 10...0-0 11.♗d3 ♕a5+!? and the check gives counterplay.

11.a3

Here 11.♗d3 is met, as planned, by 11...♘df6.

11...♘df6 12.♗d3 ♗g4

Black develops in the quickest possible way, having in mind Morozevich's manoeuvre of ...♖c8.

13.b4?!

Dubious activity. My bishop had no business on c5 anyway, but the weakness of the c4-square will be felt. Black is fine after 13.h3 ♗h5 14.0-0 ♖c8.

13...♗a7!?

Preferring the a7-g1 diagonal for the moment. After 13...♗d6 14.♗b2 ♖c8 15.♕a4+ ♗d7 16.♕b3 White is somewhat better.

14.♗b2 0-0

It was too early for 14...♖c8 because of 15.♕a4+.

15.♗e2

Preparing a square for the queen. White had some very concrete problems to solve: 15.0-0 ♖c8 and now: 16.♕e2 ♘c3 and 16.♕b3 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♘d2.

15...♖c8 16.♕d3

White's position is solid, and there is no direct active plan on the king. Therefore, I look for a way to improve my pieces.

16...♘d6!?

Planning to move the knights to the strongholds that the isolated pawn provides: 17...♘c4 and 18...♘e4 with active play.

17.0-0 ♘c4 18.♗c3 ♘e4 19.♖fc1

19...♗b8

Now I am turning my attention to the kingside. Possibly, 19...♖e8!? was even more precise, activating the last reserve.

With 19...♘xc3 Black would win the pair of bishops, but the evaluation is not clear after 20.♖xc3 ♕f6 21.♖ac1 b5.

20.♗e1 ♕f6 21.b5!?

Looking for counterplay.

21...axb5 22.♘xb5 ♖fd8 23.♖ab1 ♕h6

With all pieces developed, I am turning aggressive, creating some very direct threats. Play is unclear after 23...♗xf3 24.♗xf3 ♘e5 25.♕d1.

24.g3?!

This weakening of the pawn structure near the king had to be avoided.

Stronger was 24.♘bd4!? to continue White's active play on the queenside. Perhaps, the position would still have been unclear. No good is the direct 24...♘e5? 25.♘xe5 ♗xe2 (or 25...♗xc5 26.♗xg4 ♕xh2+ 27.♔f1 and here ends the attack) 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♘xe2 ♗xe5 28.f4 and White has defended and can start picking up pawns.

24...♕h5 Now Black's attack is very strong. **25.♘bd4 ♗d6** Or even 25...♗a7!?. **26.♗b4 ♗e5!** An important reserve joins the attack, the threat is 27...♗xd4. **27.♘xe5 ♘xe5 28.♕d1**

28...♘xf2! The decisive blow! **29.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 30.♔e1 ♕xg3+ 31.♔d2 ♗xe2 32.♔xe2** The alternative recaptures do no save White either: 32.♕xe2 ♘c4+ 33.♔d3 ♕g6+, or 32.♘xe2 ♘f3+ 33.♔d3 ♕g6+.

32...♕g2+ 33.♔e1 ♕e4!? Or 33...♖xc1 34.♖xc1 ♖e8 and the attack continues.

34.♔e2 ♖c4 White's position is hopeless. He did not survive long in zeitnot.

35.♖xc4?! dxc4 36.♗c3 Of course 36.♕c2 is impossible in view of 36...♖xd4.

36...♕g2+ 37.♔e1 ♘d3+ 0-1

This game is a good example of how to play with an isolated pawn. And, even more important, how not to play against it. Let's learn from the mistakes of others...

□ **Lubomir Ftacnik**
■ **Mikhail Gurevich**
Warsaw Ech 2005 (11)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 a6!? 6.b3

An important continuation. White supports the c-pawn to develop the bishop to its natural d3-square (not being bothered by ...dxc4), while preparing the b2-square for the other one. Black should play

6...♗b4

7.♗d2

Forced, as 7.♗b2 would lose a pawn after 7...♕a5 8.♕c2 ♘e4 9.♖c1 ♕xa2.

7...♘bd7

A model effort by Ivan Sokolov was 7...0-0 8.a3?! (more natural is 8.♗d3) 8...♗d6 9.b4?! (9.c5 ♗c7 10.♗d3 ♘bd7 11.♕c2 e5 leads to equality according to Ivan Sokolov) 9...♘bd7 10.♕b3 e5! (typical central activity) 11.♖d1? e4 12.♘g5 ♘g4 13.♘h3 ♘xh2 (it is not in every game that a black knight hits h2 so soon) 14.♗e2?! ♘f6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♘xd5 ♗e6 (to obtain control over the f3-square.) 17.♗c4 ♗xh3 18.gxh3 ♘h5 19.♘c3? ♕h4 20.♗d5 ♖ae8 21.♗xb7 ♕xh3 22.♕d5 ♘f3+ 23.♔c2 ♘g3+, 0-1 Vallejo-Sokolov, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

8.♗d3 0-0

Black has two different plans here. One, introduced in this game, is to retreat ♗b4 to d6 in order to support e6-e5 and to open the ways for ♗c8 – the most controversial piece in this variation.

Another set-up starts with **8...♕e7** Black has some similar ideas, but he keeps his bishop on b4. Both plans have their pluses and minuses, and both have a right to exist, I think. Let us investigate the consequences of 8...♕e7 a bit further: 9.0-0 0-0

● The natural move is 10.♕c2 h6 11.♖ad1 ♖e8 12.h3 dxc4 13.bxc4 e5 14.♘e4 ♘xe4 15.♗xb4 ♕xb4 16.♗xc4 exd4 17.exd4 ♘f6 and in this fairly equal position a draw was agreed, Akopian-Gurevich, Belfort 2004.

● 10.♕c2 h6 11.♖fe1 ♖e8 12.♖ad1 e5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘g4 15.f3 dxc4 16.♗h7+ ♔h8 17.fxg4 ♗xg4 18.♘e2 ♗xd2 19.♖xd2 ♕xe5 20.♘f4 ♕c5 21.h3 ♖xe3 22.♖xe3 ♕xe3+ 23.♖f2 cxb3 24.axb3 ♗d1! 25.♕xd1 ♔xh7 26.♕c2+ ♔g8 with three pawns for the piece Dziuba-Gurevich, Cappelle la Grande 2005.

● 10.♕c1. This was an interesting invention of Ivan Sokolov's from a few years ago. White threatens to take on d5 with the knight. 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 e5 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.c5 exd4 14.exd4 b6 15.♕xe7 ♖xe7 16.cxb6 ♘xb6 17.♖ab1 a5 18.a3 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♘c4 with fairly equal chances in the game Sargissian-Gagunashvili, Warsaw 2005.

9.0-0 ♗d6

One of the important modern tabiyas of the variation. Here the centre is all important. White has to keep the c4-d5 pawn tension alive, to prepare e3-e4, to increase the tension in the centre, and to develop his problem piece: ♗d2. Black has to try to prepare e6-e5 (sometimes after releasing the tension dxc4), thereby solving the problem of the c8-bishop. So it is pure classical chess, everything is transparent, everything is about the fight for the centre, for better development of the pieces, for initiative, and for space advantage. All is classical, under-

standable and simple. Or is it? Let's look at the games:

10.♕c2

– 10.h3 e5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.e4. What a tension-square d4, d5, e4, e5! How to deal with it? Usually, the one who releases the tension loses time and activity of the pieces. But the tactical nuances of the position often dictate forced replies: 12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 exd4 15.♗g5 ♘f6 16.♕xd4 ♗h2+ 17.♔xh2 ♕xd4 18.♘xd4 ♘xe4 19.♗e3 ♗d7 with equality, Fridman-Naer, Minneapolis 2005.

– 10.♖c1 e5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♘e2 ♘g4 15.h3 ♘f6 16.♗c3 ♕e7 17.♕c2 ♗xc3 18.♕xc3 ♗d7 19.♘d4 ♖fc8 20.♕a5 ♕d6 21.♗e2 g6 22.♗f3 Dreev-Godena, Warsaw 2005. White has got a miniscule, but unpleasant advantage. The game is a great example of how to play against the isolated pawn.

– 10.e4 dxc4 11.bxc4 e5 12.d5 ♘c5 13.♗c2 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♗g4 ,15.h3 ♗h5 16.a4 ♖c8 17.♖e1 ♘cd7 18.♖b1 ♖c7 19.♖b2 ♕e7 and here Black's control over the open c-file gives him the better prospects, Oei-Gurevich, Andorra la Vella 2005.

– 10.c5 ♗b8 11.♕c2 e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.f4, ½-½ Gozzoli-Malakhatko, Paris 2005.

10...h6

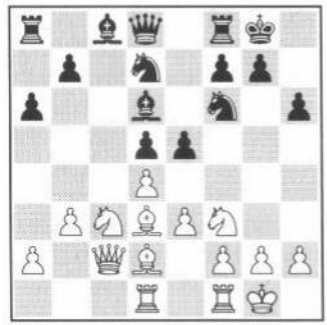
In Shabalov-Naer, Las Vegas 2004, play was equal after 10...♖e8 11.♖fe1 h6 12.h3 e5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.e4 dxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘f6 18.♗f3 ♗e5 19.♗c3 ♕b6 20.♖ad1 ♗d7.

11.♖ad1

In Vatter-Godena, Pula 2004, White took the other rook. The game is well worth seeing: 11.♖fd1 e5 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.h3 ♗e6 16.f4 ♗b8 17.♘e2 ♗a7 18.♕b2 ♕d7 19.♘d4 ♗xh3! 20.gxh3 ♕xh3 21.♗f1 ♕g3+ 22.♗g2 ♖fe8 23.♗c1 ♘g4 24.♘f5 ♕h2+ 25.♔f1 ♕xf4+!

White resigned. An excellent demonstration of the isolated pawn's advantages.

11...e5 12.cxd5 cxd5



13.e4!?

A novelty at the time. Previously 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xc5 ♗xc5 had been played, with two examples:

– 15.♘e2 ♗g4 16.h3 ♖c8 17.♕b1 ♗d7 18.♖c1 ♕e7 19.♖xc8 ♖xc8 20.♖c1 with equality in Flear-Godena, France 2003.

– 15.f4 ♗d6 16.♗f5 ♖e8 17.♕d3 ♗xf5 18.♕xf5 ♗b4 19.♗e1 ♕b6 20.♘xd5 ♘xd5 21.♖xd5 ♗xe1 22.♖xe1 ♖xe3 and Black was slightly better in Blagojevic-Sokolov, Neum 2005.

13...dxe4

But not 13...exd4 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.exd5 ♘f6 16.♘xd4±.

14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♗xe4 exd4

16.♗c1!?
Here 16.♘xd4 ♘f6 17.♖fe1!? (17.♗f3 ♗xh2+ 18.♔xh2 ♕xd4⩲) was an interesting try: 17...♗g4?! (White has compensation after 17...♗xh2+ 18.♔xh2 ♕xd4 19.♗f4, Black may try 17...♖e8!?) 18.f3 ♖c8 19.♕d3±.
16...♘f6 17.♗b2
17.♖xd4 leads to equality after 17...♖e8!? 18.♗b2 ♕b6.
17...♖e8
White has the initiative after 17...♘xe4 18.♕xe4.
18.♗f5 ♕a5!
Forcing White to exchange the bishops – which is a considerable achievement.
19.♘xd4
Or 19.♗xc8 ♖axc8 20.♕b1 ♗b4!? 21.♗xd4 ♘e4 with the slightly better chances.
19...♗e5 20.♗xc8
Here 20.♗d3 is met by the active 20...♗g4.
20...♖axc8 21.♕b1 ♘e4
Black is better due to his harmonious development. Also interesting was 21...♘d5!? planning 22...♘f4 or 22...♘c3.
22.♖fe1?

22...♘c3? What a shame, I trusted my opponent and missed (we both did) a golden opportunity to win the game: 22...♘xf2!! 23.♔xf2 (23.♖xe5 ♘xd1 24.♖xa5 ♖c1+ mate) 23...♗xd4+ 24.♗xd4 (24.♖xd4 ♖xe1 25.♕xe1 ♖c2+ 26.♔f1 ♕xe1+ 27.♔xe1 ♖xb2–+) 24...♖xe1 25.♖xe1 ♕d2+ 26.♔f1 (26.♔g3 ♕xd4) 26...♖c2. It would be nice to add some Fritz's silicon chips to our all-to-human brains. **23.♗xc3 ♕xc3 24.♘f3 ♗f6** Black's advantage is rather symbolic. A bishop is better than a knight, but White has no weaknesses. **25.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26.♖d3 ♕a5 27.♖d2 g6 28.g3 ♖e6 29.♕d3 ♔g7 30.♔g2 ♖c6 31.♕e4 ♕c7 32.♕e8 ♖e6!?** 32...♖d6 33.♖xd6 ♕xd6 34.h4 is equal. **33.♖d7 ♕xg3+!?** A nice tactical try to unbalance the pawn structure, and look for winning chances. **34.hxg3 ♖xe8 35.♖xb7 ♖e2 36.a4 a5 37.♖b5** But not 37.b4 ♖b2 38.b5 ♖a2∓. **37...♗c3 38.♖d5!** Planning 39.♖d3. With accurate defence White has managed to keep equal chances. **38...♖b2 39.♖d3 ♗b4 40.♘e5 ♖e2 41.♖d5 ♖b2 42.♘c4 ♖xb3 43.♘xa5 ♗xa5 44.♖xa5 ½-½**

□ **Reynaldo Vera**
■ **Mikhail Gurevich**
Mondariz tt 2002 (5)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘f3 a6 6.a3
A tricky variation – it is a kind of prophylaxis against both the Queen's Gambit accepted, and the Tarrasch Defence. Before we proceed, here are a couple of typical examples of Tarrasch positions with the c- and d-files open: 6.♕c2 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.a3 and now
– 8...dxc4!? 9.♗xc4 ♘bd7 10.0-0 b5 11.♗c2 ♗b7 12.♖d1 ♕c7 13.h3 ♖c8 – Black has a great game, obviously – 14.♗d2 ♗a7 15.♖dc1 ♗b8 16.♕d1 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♕h2+ 18.♔f1 0-0 with an initiative, Belli Pino-Vl.Georgiev, Bled ol 2002.
– 8...0-0 9.b4 ♗e7 10.♗b2 dxc4 11.♗xc4

♘bd7 12.0-0 b5 13.♗a2 ♗b7 14.♖fd1 (with an equal position. Black tries to destabilize the position, and to weaken the structure around White's king...) 14...♗xf3 (by the price of two bishops) 15.gxf3 ♖c8 16.♕e2 ♕c7 17.♖ac1 ♕b8 18.f4 ♘b6 19.♘b1 ♘fd7 20.♘d2 ♘a4 21.♘b3 ♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♖c8 23.♗d4 ♖xc1+ 24.♘xc1 ♕c8 25.♘d3 ♗f6 equal, Cifuentes Parada-Gurevich, Mondariz 2002.

6...♘bd7

The most common answer. Black just plays the Meran now, where 5...a6 is presumably more useful than 6.a3.

With 6...c5 Black stubbornly insists on Tarrasch-like play. After 7.dxc5 ♗xc5, Cramling-Bellon Lopez, Palma de Mallorca 1991, went: 8.b4 ♗e7 9.♗b2 dxc4 10.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 11.♗xc4 b5 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.♘d2 ♘bd7 14.♘ce4 ♗e7 15.♖c1 ♖c8 16.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 17.♔e2 0-0 18.♖c1 ♘d5 19.♘b3 ♗b7 20.♘a5 ♗a8 21.♘c6, with a clear advantage. Look up the game for a nice positional performance by Pia Cramling. The only question left is: did Bellon marry her before, or after the game was played?

7.b4

More restrained is 7.b3 ♗d6 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘e4 10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♘d2 f5 12.b4 ♕g5 13.g3 ♘f6 14.♕b3 ♗d7 15.♖d1 b5 16.0-0 h5 17.f4 ♕g6 18.♔h1 a5 19.bxa5 ♖xa5 20.♖g1 ♖fa8 ½-½ Epishin-Krivoshey, Navalmoral de la Mata 2004.

7...♗d6 8.♗b2 0-0 9.c5

The typical transformation of the pawn structure that we are so familiar with following our investigation of 6.c5. However, here the bishop may go to

9...♗c7

which changes the spirit of the position a lot. The bishop doesn't participate in the pressure on the central d4-square, but the plans involving counterplay on the kingside might be more dangerous...

10.♘a4 ♕e7 11.♗e2

11...♖b8!?

My old invention, first played in a rapid game against Lautier. Note, that it has nothing to do with advancing the b-pawn. Black prepares the opening of the centre by e6-e5, and cleverly avoids the exchange of the 'bad' a4-knight for the c8-bishop.

Practice also saw:

– 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘b6 ♖b8 (13...♘xf3+, the latest improvement of Godena's play: 14.gxf3 ♖b8 15.♕d4 ♖e8 16.f4 ♗f5 17.♖g1 ♔f8 18.♖g5 ♗g6 19.h4 h6 20.♖g3 ♖bd8 21.h5 ♗f5 22.♔f1 ♕e4 23.♗f3 ♕xd4 24.♗xd4 ♖e7 25.♔g1 ♘e8 26.♗d1 f6, with an unclear position in Banikas-Vysochin, Korinthos 2004) 14.♘d4 ♖e8 15.♘xc8 ♖bxc8 16.♕c2 g6 17.0-0 ♗b8 18.♖ae1 ♘eg4 19.♗xg4 ♘xg4 20.f4 ♘f6 21.♘f5 ♕e4 22.♘h6+ ♔f8 23.♕c3 ♖e6 24.♘g4 d4 25.exd4 ♕f5 26.d5 ♖xe1 27.♖xe1 and Black resigned, Krasenkow-Godena, Saint Vincent 2000.

– 11...♖e8 12.0-0 ♖b8 13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘d7 15.♗d3 ♘xe5 16.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.♕h5+ ♔g8 19.♕xe5 ♗d7 20.♘b6 and White was slightly better in A.Shneider-Svetushkin, Korinthos 2004.

12.0-0 e5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♕xe5

16.♖e1

White didn't equalize in the following rapid game: 16.♕d4 ♕c7 17.♘c3 ♖e8 18.a4 ♗f5 19.b5 a5 20.♖ac1 ♘e4 21.♗d3 ♘xc3 22.♖xc3 ♗xd3 23.♕xd3 ♖e4 24.♕c2 ♕e5∓, Lautier-Gurevich, Moscow 2002.

16...♖e8 17.♕d4 ♕g5!?

Black solved all his opening problems, and has more space due to the d5-pawn. He now starts an attack on the kingside.

18.♘c3 ♗f5 19.♗f1 ♖e6!?

Preparing the e8-square for another rook.

20.f3?!

This may cover many squares, but it still weakens the position of White's king. The best defence is always an attack. Therefore, 20.a4!? with counterplay on the queenside was a better choice: 20...♘e4 21.b5 a5.

20...♖be8 21.♔f2

With the idea to neutralize Black's activity by exchanging queens with 22.♕f4.

21...♘d7!

A powerful move that frees the 6th rank for the ♖e6 to the kingside. Moreover, it prepares 22...♘e5.

22.♕f4

Or 22.e4 ♕h4+ 23.♔g1 ♘f6 24.g3 ♕h6 25.e5 ♘d7.

22...♕f6 23.♖ac1 g5! 24.♕d4 ♘e5 25.♖cd1

Let us analyse some alternatives:

– 25.e4?? ♘g4+

– 25.♔g1?? ♘xf3+ 26.gxf3 ♕xd4−+

– 25.h3 ♗xh3 26.gxh3 ♕xf3+ 27.♔g1 ♕g3+ 28.♔h1 ♘f3−+

– 25.♗e2 g4 26.♖cd1 (26.fxg4 ♗xg4+ 27.♔g1 ♗xe2 28.♖xe2 ♕g7) 26...♕h4+ 27.♔g1 ♖h6 28.♕f4 ♘g6 29.♕g3 ♖xe3∓

25...g4 Planning 26...♕h4 and 27...♖h6.

26.♕f4 Black wins after 26.f4 ♕h4+ 27.♔g1 ♘f3+! 28.gxf3 gxf3, and after 26.e4 ♕h4+ 27.♔g1 ♖h6! 28.exf5 ♘xf3+ 29.gxf3 ♕xh2+ mate. **26...gxf3 27.gxf3**

27...♘xf3! Not complicated, but still an elegant geometrical combination to convert Black's activity into a material advantage. **28.♘xd5** Losing are 28.♕xf3 ♕xc3 29.♕xf5 ♖f6, and 28.♔xf3 ♕xc3 29.♕xf5 ♖f6. **28...cxd5 29.♕xf3** Here 29.♔xf3 fails to 29...♗g4+ 30.♔xg4 ♖e4. **29...♗g4** The key move. **30.♕f4 ♕h4+ 31.♔g1** Here 31.♕g3 ♖f6+ 32.♔g2 ♕xg3+ 33.hxg3 ♗f3+ 34.♔h2 ♗xd1 35.♖xd1 ♖xe3 wins easily. **31...♖f6 32.♕g3 ♕xg3+** White resigned because of 33.hxg3 ♗xd1 34.♖xd1 ♖xe3. **0-1**

We will finish at this point. My modest hope, dear Respectable Brave Reader – who managed to read until this point – that the ideas which I presented here will improve your understanding of chess in general, and of this 5...a6 Meran in particular. So, let's just go and play it, test it and improve it. Good luck!

CHAPTER 18
Who is Who

Jaan Ehlvest opines that when you are playing the chess elite you need to play classical openings. However, how often is it that you sit across some 2700 player? When playing lesser mortals it pays off to adopt more riskier stuff. Ehlvest favours a jolly combination of the Dutch and the Benoni.

Playing 5...a6 in the Meran, Alexander Alekhine lost two crucial games against Max Euwe in their 1935 World Championship match. Fritz X3D went down without a (human) fight against Garry Kasparov. And, yet, **Mikhail Gurevich** presents a strong case in favour of this flexible little move. In his inimitable style the expert explains the ins and outs. A note of warning: apart from learning a surprising opening system, there is a serious risk that you learn something about chess in general.

Black has many sound set-ups against the King's Gambit. However, surprising the adepts of this venerable gambit is impossible. Or is it? **Dimitri Reinderman** went back as far as Vienna 1903 to unearth 3...f5!?.

Sun, sea and sand inspired **Artur Kogan** to invent the anti-developing move 3...♕d8 in the Scandinavian. Sober reflection, and his database, revealed that Dorfman, Sokolov, Georgiev and Adams had already employed this positionally sound set-up before him. Kogan reveals his secrets in the Ilundain Variation.

The Dutch Stonewall is a tough nut to crack. Via the Slav move order it makes sense to attack this monolithic structure with 5.g4!?. **Sergey Volkov** is one the main experts. The grandmaster from Saransk employs the bayonet attack after both 3.♘c3 and 3.♘f3.

Did Alekhine blunder when he played 4...h6 in the French Defence against Capablanca in St Petersburg 1914? In an instructive article **Igor Glek** (together with **Elena Sedina**) argues that there is more to 4...h6 than meets the prejudiced eye.

Wouldn't you like to play the King's Indian without all the theory? A solid and complete repertoire with good opportunities to play for the win as Black? In two chapters the prolific grandmaster **Dorian Rogozenko** explains all about an Indian set-up where the king's knight is developed not to f6 – but to h6 or e7.

Players of the Volga and the Benoni will be disappointed when White avoids the main lines. **Adrian Mikhalchishin** touches upon the critical lines of the Bellon Gambit – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘f3 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d5 6.cxd5 ♕a5+!?.
The Slovenian grandmaster also surveys a Smyslov favourite – 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4!? – that combines King's Indian set-ups with ideas from the Sokolsky (1.b4).

Our regular English contributor, **Glenn Flear**, examines two 'English' opening surprises. Glenn offers a repertoire based on Reverend John Owen's 1...b6. Having read his exposé it makes sense to neglect the h1-a8 diagonal no longer.
Of more recent date is Miles' favourite move against the Scotch – 4...♗b4+. Grandmasters and patzers alike will enjoy this provocative check.

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